



THE DEVELOPMENT OF SHIITE POLITICAL THOUGHT

FROM SHURA TO WILAYAT AL-FAQIH

Ahmad Al-katib

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Or

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IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL

Say: “Have you any knowledge (Proof) that you can produce before us? Verily, you follow nothing but guess, and you do nothing but lie”. Al-An’am (6): 148.

“These are but names which you have named you and your fathers for which Allah has sent down no authority. They follow but a guess, and that which they themselves desire, whereas there has surely come to them, the Guidance from their Lord”. Al-Najm (53): 23.

“But they have no knowledge thereof. They follow but a guess, and verily, guess is no substitute for the Truth” Al-Najm: 28.

INTRODUCTION

Since very long centuries, the Shiite political thought has been linked with the theory of the right of Khilafah (Caliphate) and the leadership of Muslims, which they accord to the members of Noble Prophet's family, (Ahl al-Bayt), as it rejects Shura (consultation) as a means of electing the Imam (the leader), due to the pre-requisites of infallibility, (appointment) by text, and divine nomination. Imamate Shiites are divided into two main sects namely: (Al-Isma'iliyyah), who ruled over North Africa for a number of centuries, and (Al-Ithna Ashariyyah). Twelver-Imam Shiites, who believe in the existence of the twelfth Imam- Muhammad bin Hassan Askari and his occultation- from the middle of the third century of Hijrah to date.

As a result of limiting the Imamate in (the infallible and the occult twelfth Imam), and due to their waiting for his appearance, the Twelver-Imam Shiites thought, is marked by political isolationism and absolute negativism, till the birth of the idea of public representation of Imam Mahdi by the Jurists, and its later development to Wilayat al-Faqih (the guardianship of the Faqih) (Jurist), whereby the Shiite thought was able, through the leadership of Imam Khomeini, to establish an Islamic Republic in Iran, at the end of the 14th century of Hijrah .

Despite the fact that the Shiite thought does not consider the Faqih (Jurist) infallible, Imam Khomeini gave the ruling Faqih, in his capacity as the representative of the infallible, full authority and powers of the Imam and the great Prophet; he also considered that authority as part of Allah's authority, and gave the Faqih the right to act contrary to the provisions of the constitution and the will of the people.

All these motivated me to make a review research on the juristic deductions of the idea of Wilayat al-Faqih (Guardianship of the Jurist-Consult), which I held before. I wanted to study it anew. I did possess some parts of the details of the issues at hand.

I differed with the Imam, in specifying the different roles (in government), the separation of powers and the dependence of the idea of the Guardianship of the Jurist-Consult on Shura and the will of the people.

Before writing the final results of the study, I deem it right to give an historical introduction which will cover the history of the religious authority, from the beginning of the Major Occultation, and that is by a perusal of the early fiqhi books and the life history of scholars, in order to see which of the scholars believed in the idea of the Wilayat Al-Faqih (Guardianship of the Jurist-Consult) and it was reflected in his political stand on issues, and what kind of activities he performed? I unexpectedly discovered that the earlier scholars did

not accept idea of the Wilayat Al-Faqih (Guardianship of the Jurist-consult); or rather they were completely ignorant of it... I found also that some of them like Sheikh AbdulRahman Al-Hilli, in fact wrote refuting the idea, when Zaydite Shiites proposed it as a solution to the crisis of the Occultation (ghaybah); I discovered also that the first to write on it was Sheikh Naraqī in his 'Awaid al-Ayyam' before around 150 years. I found that The preceding scholars were found to believe in the idea of awaiting the occult Imam Mahdi and they also prohibit political activity, revolution or the establishment of a government and the performance its functions, at the time of the Occultation, due to the non-fulfillment of the two conditions of infallibility and a text (on the appointment of) the Imam.

I used to hold contrary views with some scholars in the past, who prohibit political activity or even coming closer to it. I used to hear some scholars reciting the famous Hadith "Any banner raised before the appearance of Al-Mahdi is a banner of misguidance and the owner is a Taught' (Satan or anyone worshipped instead of Allah). Even though I considered this Hadith to be a weak (inauthentic) one and not so important, I couldn't recognize the depth of the negative thought that engulfs the hauzah (the religious seat of learning in Shiite circles), and how it is rooted in history and supported by an elaborate philosophical scholasticism (al-Kalam).

Here I paused to ask myself: If the idea of the Guardianship of the Jurist is a recent and Nobel idea, unknown to the preceding earlier scholars, then what about abandoning, the four special representatives in the political thought of the age of the Major Occultation.

Based on this I decided to study the minor occultation age and the thought and stand of the four representatives of Imam Mahdi. I was very much amazed when I found also that they believe in 'waiting' and abstaining from any kind of political activities. I have the opportunity of discovering in the course of my research, historical ambiguities and question marks revolving around the truth of the claim of the four representatives, being special deputies of the occult Imam Mahdi, as part of more than twenty claims to the same effect. A lot of doubt hovers over all of them. I tried my utmost to understand what kind of political system Imam Mahdi has bequeathed for the Shiites after his occultation. Has he pointed to it? Has he left them to no avail? Why has he not explicitly and textually said anything on authority (almarji'iyah), public representation, and Guardianship of the Jurist or Shurah? Why he said nothing on the necessity of establishing a Shiite state, during his occultation. Why didn't the earlier scholars close to him understand that from him? Why did they stick to the idea of waiting?

The search for the Minor Occultation led to another issue: The existence of Imam Mahdi-Muhammad bin Hassan Askari, when for the first time in my life I found serious doubts and perplexity surrounding the issue of those days, and lack of clear picture on the part of the Musawite Imamate Shiites, who became divided after the death of Imam Hassan Askari without an apparent heir, into fourteen (14) different sects, and were scattered to the right and to the left, the thing that caused me greater shock and encouraged me to pursue

research on the issue, with the persistent urge to arrive at decisive and clear conclusions that will end the perplexity.

To my utter amazement, I discovered the extent of my ignorance of the history of Shiites, that I neither read nor hear about the details of perplexity and historical doubts on the birth of the twelfth Imam, despite the fact that I used to be a staunch missionary of the Twelver-Imam Shiites, sect from my childhood. I grew up in the hawzah and authored a number of books on the Imams of Ahl Al-Bayt and have read a lot... At that time I discovered the absence of history subject in the curricula of the educational hawzah (seminary) which is limited to Arabic language, Fiqh, Usul al-Fiqh (principles of Jurisprudence, philosophy and Logic, there is not a single lesson on Islamic or Shiite history.

Anyway, the research on the existence of Imam Mahdi is very sensitive and holds intellectual, political and social danger, and may turn a lot of things upside down and may form a strategic turning point in my life and the life of the society I belong to.

I was not able to abandon the suspended questions that present themselves to me, for I have to answer them in the affirmative or in the negative. I found that intellectual honesty and religious responsibility have made it incumbent on me to continue the research till the end.

I praise Allah the Almighty for the second time... that I was in Iran, the citadel of Imamate Shiite thought, and I visited the libraries of Tehran, Qum and Mashad. I did not leave a single old or new book on the topic, except that I made a thorough and deep study of it. And instead of the ambiguity being cleared and the doubts dispelled, the picture became more blurred and confusing. I found some earlier scholars declaring that there is no accepted sound and sufficient historical evidences on the birth of the twelfth Imam, and that it was said only on the basis of Ijtihad (Juristic deduction), philosophical speculation and guess.

I also found some scholars of the sect declaring that it is necessary to accept the existence of the Twelfth Imam, or recant the idea of Imamate, as it will come to an end with the death of Imam Hassan Askari without an issue to succeed him in the position of Imam. This is what made me conduct a new research on the doctrine of Imamate itself, and I found that it was a creation of theologians (Scholastic Scholars), and is remote, and in fact contrary to the statements and authentic traditions of the Imams, which clearly reject the monopoly of power and authority, and its revolving in a hereditary manner. These (Statements) call for the choosing of the Imam by the Ummah through Shura (consultation).

I also discovered in the course of the work, the existence of a very strong relation between the subject of believing in the existence of Imam Mahdi, and the idea of waiting, which has dominated the Shiite political thought in a period of one thousand years, and prohibits any kind of political activity in the period of the occultation. This very idea is responsible for the collapse of the Shiite and their eventual exit from real of life. There is also a strong relation between religious authority (al-Marji'iyah al-diniyyah) the Guardianship of the Jurist-consult (Faqih) which give the religious authority or ruler absolute powers similar to the powers of the infallible Imam or the Great Prophet (S.A.W), and suppresses the possibility of public participation in governance and establishment of a just political system.

In this work, I pursued research on the development of the Shiite political thought from the idea of Shura believed by the Shiite of the first generation, followed by the belief in the Imam which is based on infallibility, a text and miracles, and evolved in the second century of Hijrah, and the challenges faced by it, during the second and third centuries, till when it reached a blind alley with the death of Imam Hassan Askari without an apparent issue, as Allah's evidence on mankind.

I also studied all the evidences advanced or are being advanced, by theologians and historians on the birth and existence of the twelfth Imam Muhammad bin Hassan Askari, which can be divided into three major categories namely: philosophical-rational evidence, historical evidence, traditional textual evidence. So I had an in-depth study of these evidences evaluating and ascertaining their authenticity.

After that I studied the negative effects this idea brought on the Twelver-Imam Shiites throughout history. I also recorded the various attempts of Shiites to come out of this serious crisis, including the many efforts of bringing about Shiite Fiqhi or political revolutions against this negative thought. I finally paused at the last stage of the development of Shi'ah political thought, i.e. the stage of Wilayah al-Faqih (the Guardianship of the Faqih). I reflected on its positive and negative aspects, and I presented at the end the idea of Shurah – the idea of the members of the Prophet's household and the first generation Shiites with the hope that Shiite political thought will revert to it in future.

PART ONE

**THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE IMAMATE
OF THE AHL AL-BAYT**

(MEMBERS OF THE PROPHET'S HOUSEHOLD)

SHURA (CONSULTATION): THE DOCTRINE OF AHL AL-BAYT (MEMBERS OF THE PROPHET'S HOUSEHOLD)

The Muslim Ummah in the time of the Great Prophet (peace be upon him), after his death and during the succeeding decades of its history, accepted Shura (consultation) system, and the right of the Ummah to choose their leaders. The members of the Prophet's household were in the forefront in supporting and applying it. However, when the Ummah faced the forceful imposition of the Umayyad rulers and their holding to power by hereditary manner, and discarding of the Shura system, at that time some Shiites loyal to the Ahl Al-Bayt were influenced by these happenings. They affirmed their right to Khilafah (Leadership of the Muslim Ummah), instead of the Umayyads. They also stressed the necessity of this leadership remaining in their progeny. This idea however, was not entertained by Ahl-al-Bayt themselves, nor the Shia h of the first century of Hijrah.

Despite what the Imamate Shiites used to mention of texts on the appointment of Imam Ali bin Abi Talib by the Prophet (peace be upon him), as Khalifah after him, their literary heritage is full of other texts stressing the fact that the Great Prophet (peace be upon him) himself and the members of his household adhered to the principle of Shura and the right of the Ummah to choose their leadership.

One report from Sharif Al-Murtada-one of the prominent Shiite scholars of the fifth century of Hijrah has it that Abbas bin Abd al-Muttalib spoke to Amir Al-Muminin (Ali bin Abi Talib) during the illness of the Prophet (peace be upon him), so that he asks the Prophet, who will be in charge of affairs after him, and that if it is for us (Ahl al-Bayt) he should reveal it; and if it is for some other people, he entrust it to us. The leader of the faithful (Ali) said, we went to the Messenger of Allah when his illness became serious and we said O Messenger of Allah, choose a successor for us, He said. "No, I fear that you will be divided regarding him, as the children of Israel became divided over Harun, but if Allah knows any goodness in you, He will choose for you (a leader).

Kulayni says in 'Al-Kafi', that he reported from Imam Ja'far bin Muhammad Sadiq: 'When the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) was on his death bed, he called Abbas and Amir al-Muminin, and then he said to Abbas "O the uncle of Muhammad ... you will take the heritage of

Muhammad, pay back his debts and repulse his enemy". He replied him saying, "O Messenger of Allah, let my father and mother be your ransom, I am an old man with many dependants and little wealth, who can bear the like of your responsibilities?" He lowered his head for a while and then he said again, "O Abbas, will you take the heritage of Muhammad, repulse his enemy and pay back his loans?" He replied as before... He then said "Definitely, I will give it to the one who will take it and all the responsibilities associated with it." Then he said: "O Ali! O brother of Muhammad, will you repulse the enemy of Muhammad, pay back his loans and take hold of his heritage? He said, "Yes, let my father and mother be your ransom". 'Such is Ali, my beloved friend'.

This wasiyyah (will) as can be seen, is an ordinary personal will that is not related with politics or Imamate and religious leadership. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has put it, in the beginning before Abbas bin Abd-al-Muttalib, who became fearful of it, but Imam Ali accepted it voluntarily.

There is another will which Sheikh Mufid, used to report in some of his books, from Imam Amir al-Muminin Ali (peace be upon him), saying that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) has entrusted it to him before his death. This was a general spiritual and ethical will, and is related to the matters of endowments and charity. If we cast a glance on these traditions mentioned by pivots of Imamate Shiites like Kulayni, Mufid and Murtada, we will see that it shows the non-existence of any will from the Messenger of Allah to Imam Ali on (the issue of) Khilafah and Imamate and that he left the matter as 'Shurah' (a consultative issue). This explains the reluctance of Imam Ali in taking allegiance (bayah) for himself after the demise of the Prophet, despite the insistence of Abbas bin Abd Al-Muttalib on him to do so, when he said to him 'Stretch your hand I will give my oath of allegiance to you, and I will bring this Sheikh from the Quraish to you, i.e. Abu Sufyan and it will be said that the uncle of the Messenger of Allah has paid allegiance to the son of his uncle? No one then, of the Quraish will contend against you; and the other people follow the Quraish'. The Imam rejected that (offer).

Imam Sadiq has reported from his father, who reported from his father, that when Abu Bakr was appointed as Khalifah, Abu Sufyan came to Imam Ali and he said to him, do you agree, O children of Abd Manaf that 'Taym' will be leaders over you? Stretch your hand I will pay my allegiance to you, by God, I will support Abu Fusail with horses and men. He withdrew from him and then said, "Woe unto you O Abu Sufyan this is one of your shrewdness, the whole people have agreed upon (the leadership of) Abu Bakr. You still wish for Islam crookedness of Jahiliyyah (before Islam) and you are in Islam? I swear by God. That will never bring any harm to Islam, even if you are still the source of strife (fitnah)".

IMAM ALI'S CONSCIOUSNESS OF HIS PRIORITIES

There is a consensus among the historians of the Sunni and the Shiite worlds that Imam Ali bin Abi Talib was indignant towards the election of Abu Bakr in the beginning, and that he did not give him his oath of allegiance, but sat in his house for some period of time; that he commented on the objection of the Quraish in the (Thaqifah of Bani Saidah) that they are the tree (origin) of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) by saying: 'They advance the argument of being the tree (origin) but failed to take advantage of the fruits'.

Sharif Rida mentioned in "Nahj al-Balaghah that: The Imam complained some day against the Quraish and said "O Allah help me against the Quraish and those who supported them. They have served my kinship, turned away from me and agreed upon than anyone else'.

Despite the consciousness of Imam Ali of being the most deserving of the Khilafah, he later on paid the oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr, and that was when large number of Muslim communities apostacised (Riddan) At that time Uthman bin Affan went to him and said to him "O my cousin, definitely no one will go out to fight these people where you had not given your oath of allegiance!" (Murtada: Al-Shafi, vol-3, P. 242).

Then he sent for Abu Bakr to come to him, when Abu Bakr came, he (Ali) said to him, "I swear by God, we did not compete with you what Allah has bestowed on you of good and favor, but we thought that we have a share in this affair but we were overwhelmed. He addressed the Muslims saying: "Nothing prevented me from paying allegiance to Abu Bakr, except that I know his right (in this affair), but we see that we have a share in this affair, and we were overwhelmed. Then he paid allegiance to Abu Bakr. The Muslims (present) said: 'You have done what is right and what is good...".

No doubt the denial of Imam Ali of paying allegiance to Abu Bakr immediately (after his election), was due to the fact that he saw himself as the most suitable person for the Caliphate, that is true; or it was due to belief in the necessity of taking part in the Shura and the impermissibility of someone other than him usurping it without due right. Aman from Bani Asad had asked him 'How did your people denied you this position when you are the most deserving of it? He replied, 'O brother of Bani Asad... for some one take this position by force when we are the closest in relation to the Messenger of Allah and was most honored, that is selfishness which some souls were very rich in.

Imam Amir Mumin had said in his famous sermon named Shaqshaqiyyah: "By Allah, so-and-so has dressed himself with it (the Caliphate) and he certainly knew that my position in relation to it was the same as the position of the pivot to the grinding-stone. The floodwater flows down from me and the bird cannot fly up to me. I put a certain veil against the Caliphate and kept myself detached from it. Then I began to think whether I should assault or

endure calmly the blinding darkness of tribulations wherein the grown up are feeble and the young grow old, and the true believer acts under strain till he meets Allah (on his death). I found that endurance thereon was wiser. So I adopted patience although there was pricking in the eye and suffocation in the throats. I watched the plundering of my heritage, till the first one went his way but handed it to so-and-so after him. Nevertheless I persevered despite the length of period, and the severity of tribulations, till when he went his way of death, he put the matter of Caliphate in a group; and regarded me to be one of them. But good heavens! What had I to do with this Shura (consultation)? Was there any doubt about me with regard to the first of them, that I was now considered one of these ones?"

There is another narration, from Zayd bin Ali, that Imam Amir Muminin has said, The people gave their oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr, while I am the more deserving of that garment, but I restrained my anger and waited and lowered my chest to the ground (controlled my wrath)."

In these sermons, Imam Ali bin Abi Talib points to his being the most deserving of the Caliphate and one who with more right to it, for the Household of the Prophet are the fruits, if the Quraish were the tree (origin) of the Messenger of Allah. He does not point to the existence of any text (nass) from the Messenger of Allah specifying him as his successor, or his appointing him as the Khalifah after him. Kulayni reports from Imam Muhammad Baqir his saying: Imam Ali has never called (people) to himself and that he confirmed the people on what they did and concealed his affair'.

If the Hadith of Ghadir is considered the clearest and the strongest text from the Prophet as regards Amir Muminin (Ali), some of the earlier scholars of Imamate Shiism like Sharif Murtada consider it as an unclear and ambiguous text on the issue of Khilafah. For he says in (Al-Shafi) "We do not claim absolute knowledge in the text (above), neither for ourselves nor against our opponents, and we do not know of any of our people who claim that' (13).

Therefore, the companions did not understand from the Hadith of Ghadir or any other Hadith, the meaning of specific text or appointment to the Caliphate. Due to this, they chose the Shura way as a mode of choosing a leader. They then gave their oaths of allegiance to Abu Bakr as Khalifah after the Prophet (peace be upon him), which clearly shows that no clear meaning of Khilafah was deduced from the reported texts for Imam Ali or the non-existence of such text at that time.

IMAM ALI AND SHURA (CONSULTATION)

What emphasizes the fact that Shura (consultation) was the constitutional system that Imam Amir Muminin Ali bin Abi Talib abided by; and that he had no knowledge of vertical hereditary leadership of the Ahl al-Bayt, is his participation in the Shura process after the death of Caliph Umar bin al-Khattab, and his arguments before the members of the Shura on his virtues and his role in the service of Islam; so also the fact that he did not point to the issue of the text or his appointment as Khalifah after the Prophet. If the Hadith of Ghadir has any of this import, the Imam would have referred to it, and he would have won the day with what is greater and stronger than mentioning his virtues.

Imam Ali believed in the system of consultation and it's being first and foremost the right of the Immigrants and the Helpers (Muhajirin and Ansar). Due to this he refused to accede to the call of rebels-after the murder of Caliph Uthman, who invited him to assume power, and he said to them "This is not of your powers, this is for the Muhajirin and Ansar, anyone they chose as a leader will be a leader".

When the Immigrants and the Helpers came to him and said, "Stretch your hand, we would give you our oath of allegiance", he withdrew from them. They repeated as the first, and he also withdrew again, and they repeated that for the third time then he said "Leave me and look for another person and know that, if I responded to you, I will do with you what I know.... and if you leave me alone, I am just like one of you, I would be the most obedient and loyal to anyone you choose to conduct your affairs for me to be a vizier is better for you than to be a leader" He walked to Talhah and Zubair and put it across to them and said: "If anyone of you wishes, I will give him my oath of allegiance" They both said "No ... the people accept you more (than any other man). At the end he said to them "If you insist, my oath of allegiance "bayah" must not be secret, and it will not be taken till after the acceptance of the (general) Muslim populace, so I will go out to the Masjid (mosque) anyone who wishes to give his oath of allegiance to me let him do it". (14)

Therefore, if the theory of a "text" and appointment is established and well-known to the Muslims, it would not be permissible for Imam (Ali) to reject the revolters, and then wait for the word of the Immigrants and Helpers (Muhajirin & Ansar), as it will also not be permissible for him to say "to be a vizier is better for you than to be a leader". It will also not be right for him to put the leadership (Khilafah) before Talhah and Al-Zubair, and he will not need to wait for the oath of allegiance from the general Muslims.

There is another narration from the work of Salim bin Qays al-Hilali that discloses the belief of Imam Ali in Shura, and the right of the Ummah to elect its leader. He said in one of his letters, "What is obligatory in the laws of Allah and Islam is that the Muslims, if their leader dies or is

killed, they should not perform any act nor innovate something, nor move in order to do something new, unless they choose for themselves a chaste leader, who is learned, scrupulous, and well-versed in the legal and traditional matters". (15)

When Talhah and Al-Zubair dissented, he pleaded for his case on the basis of their oath of allegiance to him, saying: "You gave me your oath of allegiance and now you breached it." He did not point to the issue of a text from the Prophet of Allah (peace be upon him). All that he said to Al-Zubair which made him to desist from fighting him, was his reminding him of the statement of the Prophet (S.A.W) that, "You will fight him, while being a transgressor!"

Imam Ali also said to Mu'awiyah who rebelled against him ...My allegiance in Madinah is binding on you in Sham (Syria), because the people who swore their oath of allegiance to me, where the same people who swore allegiance to Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman, so the one present has no other alternative to choose, nor has the absent the right to reject, Definitely Shura is the right of Muhajirin and Ansar, when they agree on a person, and called him the leader (of the Ummah), therein lies the pleasure of Allah..'

So, Shura is the basis of leadership in the right of Imam Ali, and this was in the absence of the theory of (a text and. (divine) appointment or selection), Which was not referred to by the Imam in any instance.

Imam Ali views himself, undoubtedly, as an ordinary person, who is not infallible, and he demanded from the Shiites to other Muslims to view him in that sense. History has preserved for us a wonder of his many wonders which is transmitted by Kulayni in al-Kafi, where he says:

"I am in myself not above mistake, and I am not contented that my actions are free of it, except that Allah suffices me of myself, with what He bestows onto me'. (16)

The belief of Imam Ali in Shura (Consultation) as a constitution for the Muslims, became very clear in the process of the Caliphate of Imam Hassan when the Muslims came to him after the strike of Abdul Rahman bin Muljan on him, and requested him to appoint his son Hassan after him (as the leader), for he said "No, we did go to the Prophet of Allah and said," Appoint (for us a leader), and he said" No, I fear that you will be divided on his affairs, as Harun, but if Allah finds any good in your hearts, he will choose for you' They requested him to point to someone, but he did not . They then said to him," If we lost you, we will not lose giving our oath of allegiance to Hassan. He said, "I do not command, nor prevent you, you can discern better". (17)

Hafiz Abu Bakr Ibn Abi al-Dunya (208-281) has mentioned in the book titled "The Murder of Imam, the Commander of the Faithful, from Abdul Rahman bin Jundub from his father who said "I said " O! Commander of the faithful, if we lose you (if you die) and we will not lose, we will give our oath of allegiance to Hassan. He said, "I will not command you (to do that) nor prevent you". I repeated what I said and he replied in the same way. (18)

Sheikh Hassan bin Sulaiman has mentioned in 'Mukhtasar Basair al-Darajat' from Salim bin Qays al- Hilali, who said "I heard Ali saying, while in the company of his two sons and Abdullah bin

Ja'far and some of his close associates (supporters) ' Leave people with what they have chosen for themselves, and maintain your silence. (19)

Imam Ali the leader of the faithful has given his will to Imam Hassan and his other children, but he never mention the issue of leadership and the Caliphate, His will was spiritual, ethical and personal, or as, Sheikh Mufid has said in Al-Irshad, the will was for Hassan regarding his family, children and companions, his responsibility and his charity'. (20)

That will is as follows:

" This is what Ali bin Abi Talib has willed. He willed (enjoined) that he bears witness that there is no god (deity) except Allah Alone, He has no partner with Him, and bears witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger, He sent him with guidance and the religion of truth, that He makes it prevail over all religion, even though the pagans (polytheists) may detest (it). That "... Truly, my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death are (all) for Allah, the Lord of the worlds ... with this am I commanded, and I am of the Muslims". Then I enjoin you O Hassan and my entire children and family and to whomever my book reaches, that you should fear Allah, your Lord. " So die not except as Muslims "And hold fast, all together by the Rope of which Allah (stretches out for you) and be not divided among yourselves." I heard the Prophet of Allah (peace be upon him) saying " keeping Straight (making peace in) the relations between you is better than too much fasting and prayer (in which the relations are severed), the guilt that wipes away religion is the severing of relations. There is no power except with Allah. Maintain your next of kin and make good your relations with them, so that accountability will be light on you. (Fear) Allah in the affairs of the orphans, you should not leave them without food (even for alternate days) they should not be neglected in your presence. (Fear) Allah, in the affairs of your neighbors, they are the will of the Messenger of Allah, for he kept on enjoining us (to do good to them) to the extent that we thought he would apportion to them a share of the inheritance. (Fear) Allah in the commandments of the Quran, so that no other people will act upon it before you. (Fear) Allah in the affairs of the House of your Lord, it should not be dissented as long as you live, for if it became dissented you will not be aware of each other. (Fear) Allah in the affairs of Ramadan, for fasting it is a shield for you from the fire. (Fear) Allah as regards Jihad for the sake of Allah with your hands, wealth and tongues. (Fear) Allah in the payment of Zakat for it extinguishes the anger of the Lord. (Fear) Allah in the covenant of your Prophet, he should not be wronged in your midst. (Fear) Allah in what your right hands possess (servants and maids). Beware not to fear any blame in implementing Allah's commandments. It is enough for you (to remember) " Speak good to people" as Allah has commanded you. Do not abandon 'enjoining good and forbidding evil (Al-Amr bi al-Maruf Wa al-Nahy an al-Munkar)', lest the worst of you be made rulers over you, and the best of you will pray, and their prayers will not be accepted. I advise you my children with maintaining your relations and generosity. I exhort you against cutting your relations, competing in amassing wealth and division. "Help you one another in virtue and piety; but do not help one another in sin and transgression. And fear Allah-Verily, Allah is severe in punishment." May Allah protect you, members of the Household (of the Prophet (peace be upon him)), May he preserve the (message) of your Prophet in you. I bid you farewell. My greetings of peace, mercy and blessings of Allah be upon you". (21)

For the reason (mentioned above) this precious, spiritual and ethical will did not play any role in recommending Imam Hassan for he Caliphate, because it is devoid of any pointer to it. It was not also an alternative to the Shura system which members of the Prophets household stick to as a constitution for the Muslims.

IMAM HASSAN AND SHURA

Ibn Abi al-Hadid has states in 'Sharh Nahj- al Balaghah': 'When Ali (peace be upon him) died, Abdullah bin Abbas bin AbdulMutallib came out to the people and said, he has left a successor. "If you like, he will appear to you, and if you don't like, then there is no one on anyone." The people wept (upon hearing this) and said " No, he should appear to us". (22)

As it can be noticed Imam Hassan did not depend, in the call for oath of allegiance on the mention of any text, concerning him from the Prophet (peace be upon him) or from his father, Imam Ali Ibn Abbass pointed to the status of Imam Hassan, when he reminded the Muslims that he is the son of the daughter of the Prophet (peace be upon him). He mentioned that he is the one recommended (Wasiy) by Imam Ali (peace be upon him), but he did not show that the basis of the call to give him oath of allegiance was a text or a will on his leadership.

This explains Imam Hassan's conviction in the system of Shura, and the right of the Ummah to choose its leader. This faith became glaringly clear for the second time, when he stepped down of the mantle of leadership for Mu'awiyah, and his precondition of reverting to the same principle of Shura after his death. He mentioned as part of the conditions for reconciliation: "that Mu'awiyah has no right to hand over power to anyone after him, but that the issue of leadership will be resolve by consultation among Muslims'. (23)

If the Caliphate has been by means of a text (nass) from Allah, and appointment from the Prophet (peace be upon him), as the theory of Imamate is saying, it will not be permissible for Imam Hassan to stop down from power, in favor of anyone, under any circumstances. It will not be permissible for him after that to pay allegiance to Mu'awiyah, and to order his companions and followers to pay allegiance to him. It will not be permissible for him to neglect Imam Hussain, and would have alluded to the necessity of appointing him after. But Imam Hassan did not do any of these things; he behaved in a way that reveals his sticking to the right of the Muslims in choosing their Khalifah through the principle of Shura.

IMAM HUSSAIN AND SHURA

Imam Hussain remained loyal to his oath of allegiance to Mu'awiyah till the last day of the latter, and he refused an offer from the Shiites of Kufah to revolt against Mu'awiyah after the death of Imam Hassan. He mentioned that there was a covenant between him and Mu'awiyah, which would not be breached. He did not call the people to himself till after the death of Mu'awiyah, who breached the agreement of reconciliation, and handed over power to his son, Yazid as the Khalifah after him, Imam Hussain refused to give his oath of allegiance to him, and insisted on going to Iraq, which led to his martyrdom at Karbala in the year 61 A.H. (24)

Sheikh Mufid reveals that Imam Hussain did not call anyone to his Imamate throughout the reign of Mu'awiyah. He explains that as Taqiyyah (Insinuation) and truce (armistices) between him and Mu'awiyah, and he fulfilled his side of the agreement till the death of Mu'awiyah. (25)

There is no any trace of the theory of a text in the incident of Karbala, either in the letters of the Shiites from Kufah to Imam Hussain and their inviting him to come to Shiites gathered in Kufah in the house of Sulaiman bin Sard al-Khuza'i and they praised Allah and thanked Him. Sulaiman bin Sard said: "Mu'awiyah is dead and Hussain has shrunk back from accepting the oath of allegiance of the people. He has gone to Makkah and you are his followers and supporters and the supporters of his father. If you know that you will help him and fight his enemy, and that we will sacrifice ourselves for his sake, then write to him and let him be aware (of that); and if you fear failure and your weakness, you should not deceive the man at all. They replied, 'No, we will fight his enemy and sacrifice ourselves for his sale. He then said, "Write to him!" they wrote:

'To Hussain bin Ali from Sulaiman bin Sard and Musayyib bin Najiyyah, Rifa'ah bin Shaddad al-Bujali, Habib bin Madhahir, and his followers and supporters and the Muslims of Kufah; Peace be on you, we praise Allah, other than whom there is no deity, He has no partner.... ... After that: All praise be to Allah who punished your tyrant and stubborn enemy who snatched from this Ummah its affairs and took it by force from its rightful owners, and became a leader over it, without its consent, and then killed the good and pious among them, and left the worst of them; he made the wealth of Allah as a circuit among the tyrants and the rich, so away with him, as were Thamud gone away! He is not a leader over us, come unto us, would that Allah will reconcile us to the truth. Nu'man bin Bashir is in the palace, we don't meet him either in the Friday prayers or at the time of Eid! If it reaches us that you are preceding to us, we will drive him out till we send him to Sham (Syria) by Allah's will".

He wrote to them "From Hussain son of Ali to the leaders among the believers and the Muslims ... After that, surely Hani and Sa'id have come to me with your letter, and they are the messengers to have come to me from you, and I have understood all that you have narrated and said, the statement of most of you is on this is "We do not have a leader (Imam), come, it is likely that God will reconcile between us on the Truth and guidance".

Due to this, I am sending to you my brother and cousin and one in whom I have confidence, of my household, Muslim bin Aqil. If he writes to me that the people of thought, respect and piety among you have arrived at a consensus on what your messengers came to me with, and which I read in your letters, I will come to you very soon, by the grace of Allah. For definitely, a leader is not other than one who judges by the Book (Quran), who establishes justice, who practices the religion of truth and who puts all his services for the sake of Allah. Wassalam’.

This shows that the concept of Imam according to Imam Hussain is not other than, (the leader who judges by the Book (Quran), who establishes justice, who practices the religion of truth, and who puts all his services for the sake of Allah). He was not presenting any new theory on the Infallible Imam appointed from Allah; He was not also demanding the Caliphate as a personal right for him, because of being the son of Imam Ali, or being appointed by Allah. Because of these, he did not think of transferring the Imamate to any of his children, he did not give a will to his only son who remained alive Ali Zayn al- Abidin”. He only enjoined his sister Zaynab or his daughter, Fatimahh, and his will was a ordinary one, related to his personal affairs, and did not at all talk on the topic of Imamate and Caliphate. (27).

What confirms further the non-existence of the theory of divine Imamate at that time, was the non-mention of it by Imam Ali bin Hussain, in his famous sermon delivered boldly and bravely in front of Yazid bin Mu’awiyah, in the Umayyad Mosque, when he was arrested and taken to Syria. He said in that sermon:” O people! We have been given six (favours) and have been preferred due to seven (features): We have been bestowed knowledge, forbearance, tolerance and elegance, bravery and love in the hearts of people. And we have been preferred due to the prophet (peace be upon him) being from us, so also the Siddiq, Jafar al-Tayyar, the lion of Allah and His Prophet and the two grandchildren of this Ummah. He then mentioned Imam, the leader of the Faithful (Ali) and said “I am the son of the pious believers, and the heir of the Prophet, the drone of the Muslims, the light of Mujahidin, the fighter against breaches (of covenant), oppressors and heretics, I am the scatterer of hosts, the bravest of them at the time of hardship, and the strongest in fortitude, that is the father of the grandchildren, Ali bin Abi Talib’.

Imam Zayn al-Abidin did not allude in that his brave sermon to the issue of the will or divine Imamate, or the Law of hereditary Imamate by text. He did not say to the people, that he is the legal Imam, who should be obeyed after his father Imam Hussain. Imam Zayn al-Abidin was satisfied with the talk on the virtue of the Prophets household, and the good qualities of Imam Ali, and his historical achievements.

THE SECLUSION OF IMAM ZAYN AL-ABIDIN

Imam Ali bin Hussain did give his oath of allegiance to Yazid bin Mu'awiyah, after the incident (battle) of Harrah. (28) He refused to lead the Shiites, who were demanding revenge on the murder of his father Imam Hussain, who were getting ready for a revolt, nor did he claim the Imamate, or fight for it, as Sheikh Saduq has said, "he withdrew from the people and did not meet anyone, and no one meets him, except his closest companions. He devoted himself to the worship of Allah; only little knowledge has come from him. (29)

Sheikh Saduq exaggerated seriously, and in an irrational manner, when he narrated from Imam Sajjad: That he was exhorting Shiites to succumb to the ruler and obey him, and to keep not away from him, and to keep away from his wrath. He suspects the rebels of being responsible for the oppression meted out to them from the ruler. (30)

ELECTION OF SULAIMAN BIN SARD AL-KHUZA'I AS THE LEADER OF SHIITES

Thus, as a result of the leadership vacuum, Shiites in Kufah appointed Sulaiman bin Sard al-Khuza'i as their leader i.e., after the murder of Imam Hussain. That was when they gathered around five of their leaders, and Musayyib bin Najibah addressed them saying " O people! Elect a man from among you as your leader; because so you cant do without a leader (Amir) to refer to, and a center to revolve around. Rifa'ah bin Shaddad then stood up and seconded his statement saying: "You said that choose a man from among you as your leader, you can refer to and revolve around his banner, we second that opinion, and if you are that man, then you will be acceptable to us, one who will advise us and love our group; but you are of the opinion, and the others also saw that this (leadership) should go to the Sheikh (leader) of Shiites, companion of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and a pioneer –Sulaiman bin Sard, who is firm and resolute" then Abdullah bin Wal and Abdullah bin Sa'ad spoke. They praised Allah and glorified Him... Musayyib bin Najibah then said, you are right and have attained success, I am of the same opinion as you all". So they chose Sulaiman bin Sard as their leader. (31)

Sulaiman bin Sard al-Khuza'i led the movement towards revenging on the killers of Hussain. It became known as the movement of the Repenters (al-Tawwabin).

When Mukhtar bin Ubaidah al-Thaqafi established his movement in Kufah, he wrote to Ali bin Hussain calling him, so that he will give his oath of allegiance to him (Ali), and for him to proclaim Imamate, and to spread his call. He sent to him a lot of wealth. But (Ali) refused to accept all that from him, or even to reply his letter. When Mukhtar despaired of him he wrote to his uncle, Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah, demanding similar thing from him. He started proclaiming his Imamate. (32) Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah had actually taken the leadership of the Shiites, and had tendered the establishment of the state of Mukhtar bin Ubaidah al-Thaqafi in Kufah.

The Imams from Ahl al-Bayt (Household of the Prophet) believed in the right of the Muslim Ummah to choose their leaders. Just as they also believed in the necessity of exercising consultation (Shura), and in condemnation of coming to power by force. It is likely that we find in the Hadith that is reported by Saduq in (Uyun Akhar al-Rida) from Imam Rida from his father Kadhim, from his father, Ja'far Sadiq, from his father Muhammad Baqir from his grandfather, the Messenger of Allah, where he says, " Anyone who comes to you, with the intention of dividing the community, and snatching from the Ummah its right, and wants to become leader without consultation, kill him, Allah Almighty has permitted that'. (33)

We may discern from this Hadith, the best expression of the faith of the Imams of Ahl al-Bait in consultation (Shura) and their abiding by it. If they were calling people to follow and obey them, they were only doing that, because of their belief in being superior and more deserving of leadership (Khilafah) than the "Caliphs" who were not judging by the Quran, and were not establishing justice or truly practicing the religion.

Thus, going by the concept of Deservedness the earlier generations of Shiites, especially those of the first century (A.H) said:

“ Surely Ali was the most deserving of men after the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), due to his virtues’ and his pioneering (roles in Islam) and his knowledge. He was the best of all men after the prophet (peace be upon him) the bravest, the most generous, the most ascetic of them. But they legalized despite that, the leadership of Abu Bakr and Umar and considered them, as qualified for that honorable position. They mentioned that Ali submitted the affairs to them, accepted that and voluntarily gave his oath of allegiance to them, without being coerced into that, he left his right to them, so we also accept what the Muslims have accepted of him, and whom he gave his allegiance to. Anything other than this is not permissible for us, and nothing will suffice anyone of us other than this. So the leadership of Abu Bakr has becomes right and acceptance because of Ali’s acceptance of it.” (34).

Another sect of the Shiites meanwhile said “Ali is the best of men, due to his close relationship to the Messenger of Allah, and his pioneering roles and his knowledge. But it was legal for people to choose other than him as their leader, if the leader that will be chosen is qualified, whether he likes it or dislikes it. The leadership of a leader appointed on them, with their acceptance, is right, guidance and obedience of Allah Almighty. His obedience is a compulsory duty (imposed) by Allah.’

Another faction of them said;” The Imamate (leadership) of Ali was established at the time he called people (to accept him as Imam) and when he revealed his affair.” (36)

It has been said to Hassan bin Hassan bin Ali, who was the eldest of the Talibites in his time, and was the one to whom his father gave his will, and the custodian of the trust of his grandfather, “Didn’t the Messenger of Allah say, “Any one to whom I am master Ali is to him also a master”? He replied, “Yes, but by Allah, the Messenger of Allah did not mean Imamate and power, if he willed that he would have been explicit on it...” (37)

His son, Abdullah, used to say “We do not have in this affair, what others do not have, and the none of the household of the Prophet is Imam whose obedience is made compulsory by Allah’.

He used to dispute the statement that the Imamate of Amir al- Muminin (Ali) was from Allah. (38)

This means that the theory of a text (appointing the Imam) and the hereditary leadership among the members of the Prophets household only has no existence in the first generation Shiites.

Thus, their view of the two great companions, Abu Bakr and Umar, was positive, as they did not consider them as usurpers of the caliphate, left by the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) as a matter to be resolved by consultation (Shura) among the Muslims. And that he did not appoint anyone specifically by means of a text or injunction. This explains the order of Imam Sadiq to his followers to accept their leadership.

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CHAPTER TWO

FROM SHURA (CONSULTATION)...TO HEREDITARY RULE

THE KISSANITE THEORY

The early Imamate Shiite historians (Nukhbati, w-Ashari al- Qummi and al- Kashi) recorded the first development that appeared in the ranks of the Shiites in the time of Imam Amir al-Muminin Ali bin Abi Talib (peace be upon him) on the hands of the so-called Abdullah bin Saba, said to be a Jew, who later accepted Islam. Nukhbati said of him that he was the first to spread the claim that Ali is the right leader (Imam). He used to say in his Jewish religion that Yusha bin Nun was the Wasiy of Musa (one to lead after him, through his will). This same idea he propagated in Islam, as regards Ali in relation to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) He showed absolved himself his innocence from his enemies, and showed open enmity to his opponents. He scorned and attacked Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman and the rest of the companions. (1)

It does not matter whether Abdullah bin Saba was a real or mythical figure, for the Shiite historians record the initial appearance of the earlier development in the Shiite political thought, based on the idea of personal and spiritual "Will"(Wasiyyah), from the Noble Prophet to Imam Ali. So also the attribution of political meaning to that (Will), based on the analogy of the "Will" from Prophet Musa (peace be upon him) to Yusha' bin Nun, and the hereditary nature of the priesthood in the progeny of Yusha.

Even though this statement is weak and was confined to few people among the Shiites at the time of Imam Ali and also that Imam Ali, himself has rejected it in very strong terms, and warned those making that statement, that trend found a fertile ground to spread its ideas, when Muawiyah appointed his son, Yazid to lead the Ummah after him. The main problem faced by the people of this trend was the lack of support or outright rejection of their claim by Imam Hassan, and Imam

Hussain, and the political isolation chosen by Imam Ali bin Hussain, this led the advocates of this doctrine to gather around Imam Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah, and to consider him as Wasiy of Imam Ali, especially when he accepted the leadership of the Shiites after the murder of Imam Hassan. The Sabaiyyah infiltrated the ranks of the Kisaniyyah movement, which wanted to avenge the murder of Imam Hussain, under the leadership of Mukhtar bin Ubaidah al-Thaqafi.

Mukhtar, who was leading the Shiites for Kufah did claim that, Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah has ordered him to avenge the killing (of Imam Hussain), by killing Hussains murderers, and that he is the Imam after his father. Mukhtar did not consider the caliphs before Ali, such as Abu Baker, Umar and Uthman as unbelievers. But he considered those who fought Imam Ali at the battles of Siffin and the Camel as unbelievers. (2)

Ash'ari al-Qummi mentions that: The security guard of Mukhtar (Kisan), who influenced him towards the demand for the blood of Hussain, and who pointed to him his murderers, being his intelligence chief and executor of his plots, was more eager in words, actions and killing. He used to say that, Mukhtar is the choice of Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah (by his will) and his representative. He used to consider all those leaders before Ali as unbelievers, so also those who participated in the battles of Siffin and Camel. (3)

Despite the early falls of the kingdom rule by Mukhtar after just a short time the Kisaniyyah movement that assembled around its spiritual leader, Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah, started declaring that "The Imam must be in Ibn Hanafiyyah and in his progeny". (4)

On his deathbed, Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah, appointed his son Abdullah (Abu Hashim) as the leader after him. He directed to seek for the Caliphate, as far as he could. He informed the Shiites of making him their leader. So Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ali became the Leader of the Shiites. (5)

At the end of the first century of Hijrah, Abu Hashim became the undisputable leader of the Shiites in the absence of any formidable contender. The kisaniyyah movement disintegrated after him into many several sects each one leader of a sect claiming that he chose him and gave him his will. The Abbasids also claimed that Abu Hashim chose Muhammad bin Ali bin Abdullah bin Abbas, and that he said to him the affairs and the seeking of the Caliphate are in your hands after me. So he appointed him and called as witness, leaders of the Shiites, then he dies. Muhammad bin Ali, by that became the leader of Shiites, and the advocator of the Caliphate till his death. When he was about to die, he appointed his son, Ibrahim as the leader. He lived as the leader of Shiites and the advocator of the Caliphate after his father. (6)

Janahiyyun (Janahites) claimed that he (Ibrahim) chose Abdullah bin Muawiyah bin Abdullah bin Ja'far bin Abi Talib, who appeared in Kufah in the year 128 A.H, as the leader. He established a kingdom that extended up to Persia in the last years of the Umayyad rule. Hassaniyyu also claim that he chose their leader Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Hassan bin Hassan (Dhu al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah) as the leader after him.

Anyway, the issue of will (Wasiyyah) has developed, from the normal and personal will of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to Imam Ali, to the issue of political will from (Ali) to his son Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah, and after him to his son Abu Hashim. This is what led to conflicts between the different Shiites factions, and the claim of each one of them that he was the only one legally chosen.

IMAM BAQIR'S POLITICAL THEORY

While the different movements of the Shiites were preparing for a showdown against the Umayyad rule and (were calling for) retaliation for the murder of Hussain, and were engulfed in internal strife, Imam Muhammad bin Ali Baqir in the year 94 A.H., and after the death of his father, Imam Sajjad, entered the political and intellectual struggle. He fought a serious battle to wrestle the leadership of Shiites from his cousin Abu Hashim and his followers, and to consolidate it in the lineage of Fatimah and the house of Hussain. He considered any claim to Imam ship without the legal right, as inventing lie against Allah, even if the claimant is one of the son Ali bin Abi Talib. (7)

Imam Baqir did depend in his claim to Imam ship and in seeing himself as the most deserving of that position, on the call for retaliation against the murder of his grand father Imam Hussain, and the subsequent leadership of the Shiites in attaining that goal. He used to say: " And whoever is killed wrongfully, We have given his heir the authority to demand Qisas" he also said that the verse: "The prophet is closer to the believers than their own selves and his wives are their mothers (as regards respect and marriage), and blood relations among each other have closer personal ties in the Decree of Allah" was revealed on the use of leadership, and that it revolves around the progeny of Hussain after his death. So we have more right in the affair and have more right as regards the Prophet (S.A.W) than the believers and the Muhajirin. The children of Ja'far and Abbas have no share of the affair, nor do any of the lineages of the progeny of Abd al-Mutallib, or even the progeny of Hassan bin Ali. No one of the followers of Muhammad has any share except us. (8)

He also says, in this regard: "May Allah bless my uncle Hassan! Hassan did shield 40,000 swords after the death of Amir al-Muminin, and handed them over to Mu'awiyah. Muhammad bin Ali shielded 70,000 fighting swords, if a calamity may befall them, they will all die. Hussain then emerged and put his life before Allah together with 70,000 men. Who has more right to demand for retaliation than us? By Allah, we are the rightful owners of the affair; among us are the Saffah and Mansur. Allah says " And whoever is killed wrongfully we have given his heir the authority (to demand Qisas). We are the heirs of Hussain bin Ali and on his religion. (9)

Abdullah bin Hassan bin Hassan was however, rejecting the idea of confining the Imamate to the house of Hussain. He says disparagingly "How did Imamate become confined to the children of Hussain and not of Hussain, while the two are the leaders of the youths in paradise? They are equal in virtue, only that Hassan has another virtue over Hussain, that of being the elder. It becomes mandatory then that leadership (Imamate) must be in the one with more virtues". (10)

In an attempt from Imam Baqir to transcend this difference and to end it decisively, and to enhance the legality of his demand for leading the Shiites, he depended, in addition to the demand of blood relationship, on the issue of "possessing the weapon of the Prophet of Allah " and his inheriting it from his grandparents: as he used to say: "The position of the weapon to us is similar to that of Ark of the children of Israel, Wherever it is found, that will be where leadership will be. So wherever the weapon is found, that is where knowledge is". (11)

He asked while refuting the Kisaniyyah "Cant they say with whom is the weapon of Prophet of Allah? ... The sign that was on his sword, was also on his two sides, if they but know." (12)

Muhammad bin Hassan al-Saffar one of the pivots of Imamiyyah Shiites in the 3rd century of Hijrah –used to say: "Ali bin Hussain preferred his son Muhammad Baqir at the time of his death with the possessing of the shield that contain the weapon of the Messenger of Allah. His brother challenged him on it, and he said to them. "By Allah you have no right on it, if you have any right on it, he would not have given it to me." (13)

Saffar used to say, Imam Baqir used to point to the right of Imam to the caliphate based on the evidence of his inheriting the weapon of the Messenger of Allah, and that he mentioned that as an evidence before the people of Shura (consultation). (14)

Imam Baqir depended on his inheritance of books from his father for seeking the Imamate. Kulayni said, He did use the evidence of knowledge against his brother Zayd bin Ali, who was preparing for a revolt, and was trying to assume the leadership of the Shiites. He asked him if he knows the lawful and the unlawful, and advised him not to assume or seek leadership before sufficient perusal of the lawful and the unlawful.

One day his (Baqir's) brother, Zayd came to him, and with letters from the people of Kufah, calling him in those letters to go to them, and telling him of their meeting, and instructing him to rebel. Abu Jafar said to him:

"Are these letters their own initiative, or a reply of what you have written to them and what you called them to? "He said: No it is the peoples initiative, for their knowledge of our right and our close relation to the Messenger of Allah, and also due to what they find in the Book of Allah, the Exalted, and the obligation of our love and obedience; and due to the harshness and difficulty of our situation Abu Ja'far then said to him:

"Obedience is an obligation from Allah the Exalted and a Tradition he established in the earlier people, and in the same way He will maintain it in the later people. Obedience will be for one of us, while love will be for all. The command of Allah comes to His beloved friends (Awliya) through a transmitted injunction, clear destiny and confirmed judgment and in an appointed time, let not those who have no certainty of faith discourage you, they can avail you nothing against Allah don't be in a haste. For surely Allah does not bring things before their appointed time due to the haste of people, you should not go before Allah, and calamity will incapacitate and overpower you."

Zayd became infuriated at this juncture and then said:

"The Imam among us is not that who sits in his house and lower his curtains and who discourage Jihad, but he is that one who protects what is in his possession, and fight for the sake of Allah a true Jihad, and who defended his followers and safeguard his harem", Abu Jafar then said, "Do you know my brother, any right for yourself, of what you attributed to it which you can buttress with a verse from the Book of Allah or an evidence from the Messenger of Allah or you give a similitude of it? For definitely Allah has made some things lawful, while others he has made unlawful, and He has made certain things obligatory and gave similitudes and examples and established ways. He did not made

the Imam, who is maintaining his affairs before, an ambiguity go before him in an affair before its time, or that he fights before the right time for Allah the exalted has said regarding hunting... He has set appointed time for every thing. For every matter there is a decree, If you are quite sure of your affair, and you are certain of your matter you can go on: otherwise you should not embark on an affair of which you are in doubt and is ambiguous. Don't try to bring about the end of a rule, which fruits have not finished, and which has not come to an end and the decree has not been fulfilled. You have seen disintegration, and humiliation of the followed and the followers I seek refuge in Allah from the Imam who has lost his time and in which the follower is more knowledgeable than the followed. Do you want O my brother to revive the way of the people who disbelieved the signs of Allah and disobeyed his Messenger, I seek refuge in Allah, O my brother, that you may be crucified tomorrow, (then tears fell from his eyes and flowed). He then said, Allah is between us and those exposed our secret and deny us our right, secret and who attribute us to other than our grandfather, and those who said regarding us, what we did not say about ourselves. (15)

Kulayni is reporting this dialogue in al-Kafi in the fourth century of Hijrah.... It is likely that the Imamate Shiites fabricated it in a later date against the Zaydiyyah (Zaydite) Shiites, but it clearly reveals the evidences of Imam Baqir against his brother based on knowledge, before the inception of the theory of the text or 'will' as necessary requirements for the Imamate.

As for Zayd bin Ali, he used to say, "Imam among us is not that who sits in his house and bring down his curtains (i.e. close his doors) and discourage Jihad but the Imam among us is that who protects what is in his possession and domain and fight for the sake of Allah a true Jihad, and who defended his followers and safeguard his harem." (16)

So Imam Baqir's political theory rests essentially on the pillars of knowledge, and the possession of the weapon of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and the right of being the heir of the oppressed (Imam Hussain), more than its being based on a clear text, or a declared will, such that the theory of Imamate has not yet crystallized among the Shiites, in the beginning of the second century of Hijrah, up to the time and stage when the issue of the text and the will became central. The general population of Shiites at that time were ignorant of the right of Imam Baqir to the Imamate, and they could not distinguish him from the other pivots of the houses of Hassan, Hussain Ali and Hashim, who were advocating for the leadership of the Shiites, and were competing in that.

Imam Baqir has succeeded in forming a special group of Shiites loyal to him even though it soon became fictionalized, immediately after his death in the year 114 A.H. One of these factions followed his brother Imam Zayd bin Ali, who declared a revolt against the Umayyad Caliph Hisham bin Abd al-Malik in the year 122 A.H, drawing from the theory of "relations" He said " The relations of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) has more right to lead and rule. He called for supporting the people of the Prophet's household (Ahl al-Bayt) in a general sense. He said, " We call to the Book of Allah and the tradition of his Prophet (peace be upon him) fighting the tyrants, defending the downtrodden and giving those denied; and the distribution of this spoils (Fay) among its rightful owners equally, and returning what was taken wrongly to its owners. So also the closure of hearth, and our help for the members of the Prophets household against any one who pitched his tent against us, and deny us our right." (17)

The other faction under the leadership of Mughirah bin Sa'id, declared the Imamate of Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Hassan (Dhu al-Nafs al- Zakiyyah), who was preparing to revolt against the Umayyad rule. The third faction however, followed Imam Ja'far bin Muhammad Al-Sadiq. (18)

IMAM SADIQ POLITICAL THEORY

Imam Sadiq (A.S) was able to assert and establish his leadership of the Shiites and to prove his capabilities, vast knowledge and good guidance. He was not in dire need of the will, or an indication of it, to occupy that great position, which he occupied in the society and in history. You do not find many traditions in the Shiite heritage on the topic of a text or a will from his father on his Imamate, except a narration describing a very common will reported by Imam Sadiq himself, when he said, " My father has given me the trust of what is there". When he was about to die, he said, "Call for me witnesses." I called four witnesses for including one Nafi, the freed slave of Abdullah bin Umar. Then he said, " Write; This is what Yaqub has enjoined on his sons. O my sons, Allah has chosen for you that (true) religion, then die not except in the faith of Islam (as Muslims). Muhammad bin Ali has enjoined on Ja'far bin Muhammad, instructing him to shroud him in his garment, in which he used to pray Friday Prayer; and that he should turbaned him with his turban; and that he should make his grave a square; and should raise it by four fingers; and that he should untie the knots while placing him in the grave, then he said to the witnesses. "You can go may Allah have mercy on you. Then I said to him, "O father, there is nothing in this that requires witnesses. He than said, "O my son, I fear that you will be defeated, and that it will be said, He did not leave any will for him, so I desire that you possess the evidence. (19)

Some narrations transmitted by Al-Saffar, Kulayni and Mufid from Imam Sadiq said that he was waging a war for the Imamate against his contenders: his uncle Zayd and his cousin and Al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah, on the basis of this will of his father, in addition to the issue of his possession of the weapon of the Messenger of Allah, so also his ring, shield and flag. The problem however, was that Muhammad bin Abdullah was also claiming to be in possession of the weapon of the Messenger of Allah. This is what made Imam Sadiq to disbelieve him vehemently and to state: "By Allah, definitely he is lying .By Allah, he does not have it with him, he has never seen it, with one of his two eyes. He did not see it with his father, except if he saw it with Ali bin Hussain. (20)

Imam Sadiq confirmed in another narration reported by Kulayni in Al-Kafi that: "I have the white and red sword covers sword covers in which the weapon is kept, and it will be opened for blood. The rightful owner of the sword will bring it out for war. The progeny of Hassan do know this as they know that night is night and day is day.

It is only envy and seeking the life of this world that make them to deny it. If they seek their right with truth, that would be better for them. (21)

He also says in another narration, "They have lied by Allah. The Messenger of Allah had two swords, with one of is a sign on the right side. They should tell their two signs and their two names if they are truthful. But I do not despise my cousin, the name of the first is Al-Rusum and the other is Al-Mukhaddham. (22)

The problem that was facing Imam Sadiq was his inability to bring the weapon before the general public due to the fear of the rulers. Due to this he presented another evidence instead of it i.e. the will, where he says to one of his companions Abd-al-A'la who asked him on this problem. It will not be concealed unless he (Imam) has another evidence proof. "He pointed to the above mentioned will as evidence complementing (other evidences) for the Imam. (23)

It appears from some of the narrations mentioned by Saffar and Mufid: Surely the issue of weapon was at that time the most important deciding factor in the tussle for the Imamate between Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Hassan bin Hassan and Imam Sadiq. Imam Sadiq used to say the similitude of the weapon to us is like the similitude of the Ark (Tabut) to the children of Israel. To the children of Israel, if they find the Ark on the door of any family, Prophecy will be given to that family. To anyone the weapon goes among us, will be given the Imamate. My father wore the shield of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), and the earth showed some signs on him. I wear it and it is (still with me). When our leader (Qa'im) will wear it he will fill it i.e. the earth, (with justice) by the will of Allah." (24) Another narration points to, in addition to the weapon, the role of knowledge in determining the personality of the Imam. Imam Sadiq says on this, directing his statement to the Shiites "If you will only, when they ask you (the progeny of Hassan), and you reply then when they present an evidence on the issue (of the weapon), it is more preferable to say to them: "We are not as has reached to you. But we seek this knowledge from the scholars and the learned.

This weapon is with him who will possess it. If it is with you, we will pay allegiance to you, and if it is with some other people, we will seek for it, till we know (its whereabouts)." (24)

It can be understood from this narration that the children of Hassan were claiming knowledge and the possession of the weapon, as they also claim the possession of the Mushaf (copy of the glorious Quran) of Fatimahh, all these as evidences of their being the legal and deserving persons for the Imamate. With the ambiguity on the contents of the Mushaf of Fatimahh, Imam Sadiq deny its existence with the children of Hassan, and he used to say " In their mention of the weapon, lies what goes against them, because they are not saying the truth... The truth is in it. Let them put before us the affairs of Ali and his inheritance if they are truthful. Ask them about the maternal and paternal aunts. Let them present the Mushaf of Fatimahh, for there is in it the will of Fatimahh, and with it the weapon of Messenger of Allah, Surely Allah has said "Bring a Book (revealed before this) or some trace of knowledge (in support of your claims) if you are truthful." (25)

Imam Sadiq while assessing the feature that qualifies him for becoming the Imam said, "We surely have what will make us independent of people, but the people will be in need of us. We possess the Sahifah (Scroll) (its Length) 70 arm lengths, in the handwriting of Ali, based on the dictation of the Messenger of Allah. In it all legal and illegal issues have been explained. (26)

Imam Sadiq also explains the knowledge he has, saying. "It is an inheritance from the Messenger of Allah, and from Ali bin Abi Talib, knowledge not in need of people but people are in need of it." (27)

Neither the issue of the will, nor that of the weapon or the knowledge form a decisive evidence in the tussle between Imam Sadiq and his uncle and cousin on the leadership of the Shiites, as they were also claiming the possession of knowledge and weapon. He did not believe that that constitute sufficient legal evidence (for his claim) but only as supporting points for his claim to Imamate. This is true because Imam Sadiq was presenting himself as an Imam whose obedience has been imposed by Allah, but as one of the leaders of the household of the Prophet. Due to this he denied and rejected the statement of some of the Shiites in Kufah:

"He is an Imam whose obedience has been imposed by Allah. This is what the previous narration on the tongue of Sa'id al-Samman and Sulaiman bin Khalid has mentioned: Imam Sadiq

was one day sitting under his Thaqifah (Shade), when some people of Kufah sought permission to see him. He allowed them in. Having entered they said to him, "O father of Abdullah, some people came to us, claiming that among you the household of the Prophet is the Imam whose obedience has been imposed as a duty by Allah." He replied: "No, I don't know that in our household." They then said, "O father of Abdullah, they are people of hard work (in worship) seclusion and fear of God, and they are claiming that you are the one. He replied, "They know what they say better (than me). I did not command them to say so". (28)

As a consequence of the lack of any special (divine) feature on the part of Imam Sadiq, and the lack of any knowledge of a (divine) text for the Imamate of Imam Sadiq, in the views of the Shiites of that time, the movement of Zaydites, under the leadership of his uncle Zayd bin Ali, who initiated a revolution in Kufah in year 122 A.H. The Shiites his death, gathered around his son Yahya bin Zayd, who led another revolt against the Umayyad regime in the year 125 A.H. After three years of the failure of these two uprisings, another widespread Shiite uprising erupted in the year 128 A.H, under the leadership of one to the Talibites, i.e. Abdullah bin Mu'awiyah bin Abdullah bin Ja'far Tayyar. That was the revolt that really shook the masses of the Shiites in various cities of Iraq, which also spread to Al-Mahin and Hamadhan Qumas, Isfahan, Rayy and Faris. The slogan of the uprising was "to Rida of the family of Muhammad. It was the slogan of the general masses of the Shiites at that time.

Abdullah bin Mu'awiyah made Isfahan the center of his movement and call, and also his area of influence. He sent for the other Hashimites, Alawites and Abbasids, to come to him and contribute in administering the area under his control. A large number of them trooped to him. (29)

After the subsequent failure of this revolt also, the Shiites started claiming the Imamate of Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Hassan bin Hassan (Dhu al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah), who was considering himself as the Awaited Mahdi. The majority of Shiites paid allegiance to him including the Abbasids Al-Saffah and Mansur. (30)

THE ABBASIDS THEORY OF IMAMATE

The Abbasids who became victorious in the year 132 A.H found themselves in great discomfiture. They dissociated themselves from the old Shiite ideas, and altered their political theory, that is by redesigning the source of the legality of their nascent regime, depending on the right of their grandfather Abbas bin AbdulMutallib to inherit the Prophet (S.A.W) more than his cousin, Ali bin Abi Talib. _____

In the sermon of Abu Abbas al-Saffah, who became the first Abbasid Caliph recce uath paid allegiance in Kufah on 12th Rabi Awwal 132 A.H, he described the children of Abbas as the true protectors and defenders of Islam and the Muslims, and Islam's fortress those who maintain it (Islam) and its real helpers. Then he pointed to their relationship with the prophet; and that Allah has favored them with being the Prophets relations and his kith and kin. He then recited several verses of the Quran, i.e. " Allah wishes only to remove evil deeds and sins from you, O members of the household (of the Prophet), and to purify you with a thorough purification". Say (O Muhammad), " No reward do I ask of you for this except to be kind to relations". "And warn your tribe (O Muhammad), of near kindred". "What Allah gave as booty (Fay) to His Messenger, from the people of the townships—it is for Allah, His Messenger, the kindred of the Prophet (peace be upon him); "And know that whatever of war-booty that you may gain, verily one –fifth of it is assigned to Allah, and to the Messenger, and to the near relatives of the Prophet (peace be upon him). He then criticized the views of the Saba'iyyah (followers of Abdullah bin Saba') who were inclined to the views of Kisaniyyah, saying, "Saba'iyyah claim wrongly that some people other than us have more right to ruler ship and Caliphate than us, evil be their faces."

Dawud bin Ali, the uncle of the Caliph Abu Abbas has pointed out, in his speech of paying allegiance (bay'ah) to his nephew, to the new source of legality for the Abbasid state, as the inheritance of Abbas. He said, " the Muslims are now in the covenant of Allah. His messenger and Abbas."

Mas'udi mentioned in 'Muruj al-Dhahab' "The Rawandites, who were the Shiites from the children of Abbas from Khurasan and elsewhere used to say: The Messenger of Allah (S.W.T) has died, the most deserving of people for the Imamate after him was Abbas bin Abd al-Mutallib, for he was his uncle, his heir, and the closest of his relatives. Allah has said: "And blood relations among each other have closer personal ties in the Decree of Allah. And people have usurped his right from him, and have done injustice to him, till the time when Allah returned it to them, despite the fact that he has never abandoned the Caliphate. They dissociated themselves from Abu Bakr and Umar. They legalized the oath of allegiance to Ali bin Abi Talib, due to its legitimization by Abbas, i.e., in his statement " O my nephew! Come to me I will pay my allegiance to you, so that none will oppose you. Likewise due to the statement of Dawud bin Ali on the pulpit (minbar) of Kufah on the day allegiance was paid to Abu Abbas, " O people of Kufah, no Imam appeared among you after, the Messenger of Allah, except Ali bin Abi Talib, and the leader among you now i.e. Abu Abbas Al-Saffah." (33)

The Abbasid Caliph Mahdi Muhammad bin Abi Ja'far Mansur confirmed this theoretical shift, when he established the Imamate of Abbas bin Abd al- Mutallib after the Messenger of Allah, and called the Rawandites to it, and to pay allegiance to him. He said, " Abbas was his uncle his heir and

the closest person to him. Definitely Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali, and all those who became Caliphs and claimed Imamate after the Messenger of Allah, were usurpers who jumped to what they have no right on.” (34)

Mahdi established the Imamate and the Khilafah of Abbas bin Abd al-Mutallib after the Prophet (peace be upon him), for his companions and allies, as well as the Muslim community (Ummah). He then established it for Abdullah bin Abbas, after the death of Abbas. After Abdullah he established for Ali bin Abdullah known as Sajjad and after him, for Muhammad bin Ali bin Abdullah, and then for Ibrahim bin Muhammad, known as the Imam, and after him for his brother Abdullah bin Muhammad Al-Saffah, then for his brother Abdullah Mansur, the father of Mahdi.

The Rawandites based on the above said, “ The Messenger of Allah, the Exalted has been received (by Allah), the person most deserving of the Imamate after him was Abbas bin Abd al-Mutallib, because he was his uncle, heir and his closest relation, Allah has said, “And blood relations among each other have closer personal ties.” People did usurp his right and committed injustice to him till the time Allah returned it to them. There is no Imamate among women. Fatimah has no inheritance as regards the Imamate. Cousins and grandchildren cannot inherit anything with the existence of the uncle. So Ali and the children of Fatimah cannot inherit the Imamate, in the presence of Abbas. Due it this, Abbas and his children became, of all people, the most deserving of it. (35)

In this way, the Rawandites developed a political theory based on inheritance and the right of blood relationship, and discarded the Shura, when they said, “the election of the Imam by the Ummah is invalid and a mistake. It can only be valid through its establishment and a covenant in the past by the one who accepts and appoints him to success him after him.” Jahiz has authored, a book, on this issue and entitled it, “The Book of the Imamate of Children of Abbas, arguing in favor of this opinion.

THE OPPOSITION FROM THE HASSANITES

Naturally, Muhammad bin Abdullah (Dhu al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah), who was the greatest leader of the Shiites at that time, did reject the new Abbasid theory, as he rejected paying allegiance to Saffah and Mansur. He wrote a long letter to the latter mentioning in it, "Definitely It is our right, you claimed this affair using us, and fought for it with our followers and supporters, and encouraged people (to fight) through our virtue. Definitely our father, Ali was the owner of the will, and he was the Imam. How did you inherit his right, when his children are alive? "Mansur wrote a long reply to his letter, saying in it, "As for your statement that you are the children of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), Allah, the Exalted has said in His Book, "Muhammad (peace be upon him) is not the father of any of your men," but you were the children of his daughter, it is a very close relationship, but it cannot inherit, it cannot inherit leadership. (37)

Dhu al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah then appeared in Madinah, in the beginning of Rajab of the year 145 A.H and declared that he is the most deserving of the Caliphate among the children of the Immigrants (Muhajirin). He pointed that all the major centers of Islamic world have paid their allegiance to him. He encouraged people to pay their allegiance to him due to the allegiance of the nobles among the children of Hashim given to him. (38)

Isfahani in his "Maqatil al-Talibiyyin reported that Sadiq allowed his two sons Musa and Abdullah to join the revolt of Muhammad bin Abdullah in Madinah. Muhammad had wanted to exempt them from participating in it, but Ja'far insisted on that, as an expression of his support for the movement of Dhu al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah.

THE GENERAL SHIITE THEORY

The issue of revolting against the Umayyads served as a rallying force for all the different factions of Shiite movement in the beginning of the second century of Hijrah. The general populace of Shiites did not generally distinguish between the various Imams from the Prophet's household. Due to this, they used to join any movement led by anyone of them. Salim bin Abi Hafs, who was the first to call people to the Imamate of Sadiq after the death of his father, later joined the movement of Zayd, together with some of his companions, namely, Kathir al-Nawa, Abu Isma'il or Kathir bin Isma'il bin Nafi al-Nawa, Hakam bin Uaynah, Salmah bin Kahil and Abu al-Miqdam Thabit al-Haddad. (39)

Sulaiman bin Jarir used to say, "Anyone who pulls out his sword from among the children of Hassan and Hussain, and he is a scholar ascetic and brave, he is the Imam, Ali was the best of men after the Prophet and the most deserving of the Imamate, but he handed over to the first three rightly-guided Caliphs the affairs willingly, and abandoned his right wishfully, we accept what he accepted, we hand over what he handed over. He has confirmed the Imamate (Leadership) of Abu Bakr and Umar, because of their being chosen by the Ummah as a right through Ijtihad (analogy). He also used to say: Imamate (leadership) is established through consultation in the entire Ummah. Even though the Ummah has erred in paying allegiance to the two in the presence of Ali, but that error has not reached the stage of disobedience (fisq), it is an error in analogy (ijtihad). However, he blamed Uthman due to the new things he instituted. He considered him an unbeliever due to that. Likewise he considered 'A'ishah, Zubair and Talhah as unbelievers for their waging war against Ali... (40)

Abu al-Jarud Ziyad bin Abi Ziyad al-Hamadhani al-Kufi was initially supporting Imam Baqir, and then he shifted to the party of his brother Zayd bin Ali, together with a large member of his companions. Despite the fact that he was an extremist as regards the companions, for he blamed them for not recognizing Imam Ali and electing him, he denied the existence of any clear text on the Imamate of Ali. He said it was by illustration, not by name. Due to this, the Jarudites based their theory of Imamate on the basis of challenge and revolt (revolution), and not on the basis of a text. They believed in including the children of Hassan and Hussain in the Imamate, and rejected confining this right to the children of Hussain alone, as well as the existence of any kind of texts on this. (41)

As a result of that they said: "The Imamate of Ali bin Abi Talib is established at the time he called the people, and made his affair manifest" Hussain became the Imam later at the time he revolted; then Zayd bin Ali ... then anyone who called to the obedience of Allah from the family of Muhammad, is the Imam. (42)

The Jarudites and the Zaydites generally rejected the confinement of the Imamate to the children of Hussain, and considered anyone saying that, as having gone out of the fold of Islam. They said "It is to be decided by consultation among the entire children of the two. And that the Imamate after Hussain has become by the election and consensus of the Prophets household on one person among them, and their acceptance of him, and his subsequent taking up of arms. (43) They went to the extreme against the Imams of the line of Hussain, and alleged that anyone of them who claim the Imamate, while sitting in his house lowering down his curtains, is an unbeliever and a Mushrik

(one who associate any thing with Allah), so also anyone who follows him on that or who accepts his Imamate. (44)

Despite the Jarudites being the most extreme sect on the issue of a text, in the beginning of the second century of Hijrah, they never said that the Imamate would only be established through a text till the Day of Resurrection. They however, confined the text to Imam Ali, Hassan and Hussain, only saying: The Imamate after that is through Shura (consultation action) within the progeny of Imam Ali to the Day of Resurrection. Any person from among them who appeared and is qualified and deserving, he is the Imam. (45) Another statement from a section of the Shiites at that time, saying that the Imamate has ceased after Hussain, supports the above position. If added that the Imams were only three, i.e. those named and appointed by the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), through his will, and he made them evidences on the people, and leaders after him, one after the other, and including the rejection of the Imamate of anyone after them. (46)

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22. Saffar: Basa'ir al-Darajat, P. 148
23. Kulayni, op. cit vol.1 P 278, 289
24. Saffar, op.cit, P 174-176, Mufid, of cit, P. 274-275
25. Saffar, op-cit, P. 158
26. Kulayni, op.cit, Vol. 1, P-241
27. Saffar, op.cit, P. 142
28. ibid. p. 326
29. Kulayni, op.cit, Vol. 1 P.241
30. Nubakhti, op-cit, P.62, Mufid op-cit., P. 268, Isfahani, op. cit, P. 167, Tabari, vol, 9, P.49
31. Nubakhti, op. cit. P.62
32. Tarikh al-Tabari, Vol. 6, p. 43 & 83, Ibn Al-Athir: Al-Kamil, Vol. 5 P. 315.
33. ibid.
34. Mas'udi: Muruj al-Dhahab vol.3 P. 252
35. Ash'ari: Al-Maqalat wa al-Firaq P.252
36. Ash'ari op.cit. P 67
37. Tabari Vol6, P. 198, Ibn al-Athir, op-cit Vol.5 P 255
38. Tabari: Vol 6. P.188 –190, Ibn al-Athir, op-cit. vol. 5 P.255
39. Al- Isfahani, op. cit. P. 277
40. Muhammad bin Ali al- Ardabili al- Ha'iri. Jami' al-Ruwat, Vol.2, p.544 Al-Shahristani: Al-Milal wa al-Nihal, Vol.1 p160.
41. Mufid: Al Masa'il al-Jarudiyah fi Ta'yin al-Khilafah wa al-Imamah fi Walad al- Hussain bin Ali, P.2, Mufid: Al-Thaqalan, P.10
42. Nubakhti op, cit, P, 54
43. Ash'ari, op.cit, P. 19
44. Nubakhti, op, cit pp, 48 –49, Ash'ari al Qummi: Al-Maqalat wa al-Firaq- , p. 19

45 ibid.

46 Nubakhti:op.cit.p.54

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CHAPTER THREE

THE INCEPTION OF IMAMATE THOUGHT

After the Kissanite development that took place in the Shiite ranks at the end of the first century of Hijra, revolving around the idea of the will from the Noble Prophet in favor of Imam Ali, which he in turn, transferred to Hassan and Hussain at the time of his death; then it went to Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah, which he later bestowed unto his son Abu Hashim Abdullah, that development that led to the fact ionization of the Shiite movement into several sects at the end of the first century, when the various factions claim (possessing) a will from Abu Hashim. This eventually led to a big internal strife, in the ranks of the household of the Prophet, being divided into Abbasids Alawites Talibites, Fatimides, Hassanites, Hussainites, Zaydites and Ja'farites. After that development, and what became of the Shiites, in terms of small groups, another development took place in their midst in the beginning of the second century of Hijra, with the confinement of the Imamate to the household of Hussain, and appointing, from among them, the eldest son of the past immediate Imam, and the claim of infallibility and divine appointment for the Imam.

UMAYYAD POLITICAL THEORY

It may be that the claim of infallibility of the Imam from the household of the Prophet was a reaction from some Shiites, on the appointment of the Umayyad rulers of their sons to succeed them, after them on the pretext of general good (Maslahah) of the Ummah, as Mu'awiyah bin Abi Sufyan has said when he appointed his son Yazid, as the Caliph after him. They also claimed infallibility for themselves, so also absolute powers, including their demand from the Muslims absolute and unconditional obedience, even if that constitutes an act of disobedience to Allah, the Exalted.

It is well-known that the Umayyads who transformed the Islamic Shura system into a political hereditary system, based their political theory on the doctrine of 'Jabr' (Compulsion) and the divine will, saying that; Allah has chosen them for the Khilafah, and has given them power, and that they are ruling with the power (Qudrah) of Allah, and they are acting in line with His will. They consolidated their rule with a kind of holiness. They exalted the affair of the Caliphate and the

Caliph, and prohibited him from the fire of hell... describing him in lofty religious attributes and titles... because to them they (the Caliphs) represent the will of Allah. (2)

This doctrine became clear in the statement of Mu'awiyah bin Abi Sufyan when he entered Kufah, after his agreement with Imam Hassan: "Surely I fought you, so that I will be a ruler over you, and Allah has bestowed that to me, though you detest it. (3) And his statement to an Iraqi delegation which came to him in Syria: "The Earth belongs to Allah, I am the Khalifah, (Vicegerent) of Allah, whatever I took is for me, and whatever I left for the people, is a favor from me... it is a rule given to us by Allah. (4)

Ziyad bin Abih, Mu'awiyah's governor in Iraq, said in his famous sermon (Al-Batra) to the people of Basrah " O people we have become your leaders who repel harm from you. We rule you with the power of Allah given to us, and we protect you from harm by means of Allah's bounty given to us. We have on you (the duty of) absolute obedience in what we love, and you have on us (as a right), justice and fair play, in what we have been given charge. Make our justice and bounty as your right by advising us rightly. (5)

Dahhak bin Qays al-Fihri said, when the people of Iraq opposed Mu'awiyah's call to give a covenant on appointing his son Yazid as Khalifah (after him) in the year 46 A.H:

"What has Hussain or his children to do with the rule of Allah, wherein He has made Mu'awiyah, His vicegerent on His earth? (6)

Yazid bin Mu'awiyah said in his funeral ovation to his father, "Mu'awiyah bin Abi Sufyan was one of the servants of Allah, favored by Him with the Khilafah, bestowed him and established his (rule).... Allah has put on our shoulders what was given to him" (7).

Rabah bin Zabda' al -Judhami said to the people of Madinah when they were reluctant in paying allegiance to Yazid:

" We are not calling you to Lakhm or Judham or Kalb, but we are calling you to Quraish and to whom Allah has given this affair exclusively i.e. Yazid bin Mu'awiyah. (8)

Baladhuri in 'Ansab al-Ashraf' said: When AbdulMalik bin Marwan wanted to go over to Syria, he delivered a sermon to the people in Kufah, and showed them the high status of the ruler, and said to them " He is Allah 's shadow on earth " He also motivated them on obedience (of the ruler) and on remaining with the community. (9)

Hajjaj bin Yusuf has also said to the people of Iraq, " The Commander of the Faithful AbdulMalik bin Marwan was placed in authority in his land by Allah, and is pleased with him as an Imam on His servants." (10) Hajjaj was the first to use the word al-Ma'sum, (infallible) in describing Abdul Malik bin Marwan and that was in his letter, in which he said: For the servant of Allah, AbdulMalik, the Leader of the Faithful and the Khalifah (vicegerent) of the Lord of the worlds, supported with authority, the infallible from error in words or deeds, through the protection of Allah, which is necessary for those who possess His affair." (11).

Marwan bin Muhammad has said in a congratulatory letter to Walid bin Yazid, in the year 125 A.H: "May Allah bless the Leader of the Faithful for what has come to him of authority on His servants and the inheritance of His land. The leader of the faithful has a special place in the sight of Allah, who strengthens him with the best of Lands, and he did what Allah showed him as right, and performed independently what he has take of it. His rule has been affirmed in the earlier scriptures,

by its appointed time. Allah has favored him with it, of all His creatures, after seeing their condition. So he put that responsibility on him with all its hardships and made him in charge of the affairs.”(12).

Historians mention a long letter for Walid bin Yazid on bay'ah (paying allegiance) to his two sons as crown princes. He expatiated in it the Umayyad theory of the Caliphate. It is mentioned therein: “ Allah has appointed the Caliphs to succeed one another on the principles of Prophet hood, when He took the soul of His Prophet (peace be upon him), So the caliphs appeared one after the other, on what Allah has given as inheritance to them of the affairs of his Prophets (peace be upon them), and made them succeed them on that. No one opposes them, except Allah that annihilates him. None leaves their community except Allah destroys him. None despises their authority and questions Allah’s destiny regarding them, except Allah gives them power over him and imposes them on him, and makes him as example and exhortation for others. Likewise Allah does for those who have abandoned the obedience, of which he has been commanded to stick to, and to prefer it to anything else. It is through the Caliphate that Allah protects those on earth, and makes them to depend on it... anyone who receives a portion of it, is a friend of Allah, obedient to him and on His right path. He will receive the good of this world and the next. Any one who deserted and detested and disobeyed Allah regarding it, he will lose his share, disobey his Lord and also lose this world and the next. He will be of those overpowered by misery and wretchedness... Obedience is the foundation of this affair and its summit, reins, basis, preservation and support, after the words of Ikhlas (La ilah illa Al-lah)- ‘There is no deity except Allah’, by which Allah has distinguished between His servants, due to the abandonment of obedience and its loss and the turning away from it, and changing it. Due to this Allah destroyed anyone who went astray and became rebellious, exceeded limits, and left Divine guidance on right cousins and ways of piety, etc. so stick to the obedience of Allah regarding whatever comes over to you, or whatever you achieved and what ever befalls you of events. You should seek Allah’s pleasure through it, for you have seen how Allah gives status to the obedient ones, how He has raised their positions, how clear He made their evidences, prevail and how He obliterated the falsehood of those who opposed and hated them, who wanted to extinguish the light of Allah in their possession”.

He then discussed the system of Crown Prince (Wilayah al-Ahd) and Khilafah through hereditary means saying: “The affair of this covenant is part of the perfection of Islam, and the accomplishment of what Allah has bestowed on His people in terms of great favors. It is also part of what Allah will give of great reward for anyone who did it and uttered it with his tongue, and part of what Allah will cause to have great effects on the Muslims... Praise Allah, your lord, who is kind to you, and the one who has guided you to in this affair of (crowning a prince), which Allah has made a source of peace and tranquility upon which you depend. The leader of the faithful, since his ascension to the throne has been giving utmost importance and concern to this issue, cause of his knowledge of the status of this affair with the Muslims, and what Allah has shown them of the affairs they envy, one towards the other, and of what he gives to them of what He has destined for them, and what He chooses for him and them, and what Allah decrees for him and them on that what his friend who rules (decides) The leader of the faithful found it right to take a covenant from you similar to the covenant you are fulfilling now, on similar terms. He know the place of that affair which Allah has made a source of immunity from error, a success righteousness and a life, the leader of the faithful has made Al-Hakam bin Amir al-Muminin and Uthman bin Amir al-Muminin the Caliph after him. The two are of those whom the Leader of the faithful hopes Allah has created for this purpose and has shaped and perfected them in all virtues. Those whom he will appoint to succeed

him due to their good understanding (of affairs), right religions conduct, integrity and profound knowledge of people's welfare--- so pay allegiance to Al-Hakam bin Amir al-Muminin in the name of Allah, and His blessing and them to his brother after him on total obedience. This is the issue which you sought to delay and you were in a haste to see you praise Allah for making it to pass and destining it for you--- We seek and implore Allah other them whom there is no god... that He blesses, the Leader of the Faithful and you in what he has decreed on his tongue of that affair, and that he makes what comes of it, a means of prosperity and happiness and competition (towards good). That rests with Him. None has power over that except Him.

The basis therefore, of the Umayyads calling on the Muslims to obey their Caliphs in absolute sense is the statement of Allah the Exalted "Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you", and interpreting obedience to mean absolute obedience in virtue as well as in vice.

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THE REACTION OF THE SHIITES

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This is what caused a reaction from the Shiites, who form the main opposition to the Umayyads. They first asserted the right of the household of the Prophet in the Caliphate and government, then some of them pointed to Allah's appointment of them, and yet another group declared their infallibility. These concepts that crystallized at the beginning of the second century of Hijrah, coupled with the factionalization that was like a hurricane in the Shiite movement, and the internal tussle for leader ship by the different wings of the household of the Prophet. All these led to the evolvement of the idea of Divine Imamate for the household of the Prophet, based on the principles of (Infallibility, Divine text and Divine Appointment), especially according to a section of them.

On top of the list of those advocating for this wre the following:

1. 1. A famous theologian: Abu Ja'far al-Ahwal Muhammad bin Ali Nu'man, nick named 'Mumin al-Taq', who authored a number of books on this topic namely, Kitab al- Imamah, Kitab al-Ma'rifah, and Kitab al-Radd ala Ahl-Mutazilah fi Imamah al-Mafdul.
2. 2. Ali bin Isma'il bin Shu'aib bin Maitham Tammar Abu al-Hassan al-Maithami, about whom Tusi said in 'Al-Fihrist' " he was the first theologian to discuss the doctrine of Imamate and he wrote a book on this, (al-Imamah) he also wrote 'Al-Istihqaq' and 'Al-Kamil', on the same issue.
3. 3. Hisham bin Salim Al-Jawaliqi
4. 4. Qays Al-Masir
5. 5. Hamran bin A'yun
6. 6. Abu Basir, Laith bin Al-Bukhturi al-Muradi al-Asdi

7. Hisham bin al-Hakam al-Kindi d, 279 A.H) who wrote 'Al-Imamah', Al-Radd ala Hisham bin Salim al- Jawaliqi, Al-Radd ala Shaitan al-Taq 'Kitab al-Tadbir fi al-Imamah, Imamah al-Mafdul', Al-Wasiyyah wa al-Radd ala Munkiriha' Kitab Ikhtilaf al -Nas fi al-Imamah and 'Al Majalis fi al-Imamah'. Sheikh Tusi said of him in the Fihrist he was of those who started the logical discussions on the Imamate and refined the school through rational means. He was a skilled theologian (scholastic). Allama Hilli said of him in his 'Al-Khulasah'. He was the first person to start discussions on (Imamate text and will) and he refined the school through rational means.
8. Muhammad bin Khalil known as al-Sakkak, companion of Hisham bin al- Hakam was also a theologian. He differed from Hisham in many things, except the principle of the Imamate. He has a number of books; some of them are Kitab al-Marifah, Kitab al-Istita'ah, Kitab al-Imamah, Kitab al-Radd ala man Aba Wujub al-Imamah bi al-Nass. (14) These scholastics have opined that, "Imamate is an obligation from Allah. It is among the members of the Prophet's household, and it is hereditary in the children of Hussain downwards till the Day of Judgment. It is established by means of a text (nass) or will or miracles from the Unseen. Zayd bin Ali was taken aback with this theory, when he went to Kufah in preparation for his revolt against the Umayyad ruler, Hisham bin Al-Hakam in the year 122 A. H. That was when Mumin al-Taq was invited to join his movement but he rejected that because Zayd was not an Imam chosen by Allah.

Mumin al-Taq said "Zayd bin Ali sent to me while in hiding. So I went to him, and he said to me: "O father of Ja'far, what do you say if a visitor came to you.... Will you go out with him? He said, I said to him, " If he were your father or your brother, I will go out with him" He said, "He then said to me", I want to go and fight those people, come out with me.' He said, I said No I will not do that, may I be your ransom. He said, ' He then said to me, "Do you prefer your soul over nine? He said ' I said to him " It is only one soul, If Allah has a sign and evidence (Imam) on earth, then the one who abandoned you is saved, and anyone who go out with you (in revolt) will be doomed. If Allah has no sign (Imam), then the one who abandoned you and the one who supported you, are the same". He then who said to me" O Father of Ja'far, I used to sit with my father on a dining arrangement, he used to give me a fat morsel, and he made a hot morsel cold for me as a sign of his compassion on me. But he did show compassion on me from the fire of hell, as he taught you religion, but he did not teach me. Then I said to him, " May I be your ransom, of his compassion on you from the heat of hell fire, he did not tell you. He feared that you will not accept it and you will go to hell-fire, and he told me, if you accept you are saved and if I am not accepted he doesn't mind. If I will be put in the hell-fire, just as Ya'qub, concealed the dream (of Yusuf) from his children.

Kashi reported in his "Rijal" a narration similar to the above but he said, "The dialogue took place before Imam Sadiq and that Zayd bin Ali first asked Mumin al-Taq a question: O Muhammad, it has reached me that you claim that among the family of Muhammad (peace be upon him) there is an Imam, whose obedience is an obligation? He replied with the same response. He then said to him, " Your father

did not want to tell you, lest you disbelieve, and there will be no intercession for you.”

Perhaps the first and the most powerful philosophical dialogues and debates that evolved on the necessity of the infallibility of the Imam, were the ones conducted by Hisham bin al-Hakam, which were reported by Saduq and Mufid, and they are as follows:

Mufid says in al-Irshad: Hisham bin Al-Hakam conducted a debate with a man from Syria, in the presence of Imam Sadiq on a mountains edge, by the side of the Haram. The Syrian man said to Hisham:

“O young man ask me on the Imamate of this man” i.e. Abu Abdullah – Hisham became angry to the extent of trembling, then he said to him:

“ Tell me.... Is your Lord more concerned with His creation than themselves or not?

The Syrian replied, “ My Lord is more concern His creation. “ Hisham then said “ What has he done for them in their religion? The man replied. “He commanded them (to obey Him) and established evidences on what He has commanded and He removed by that their excuses”.

Hisham then said to him, “ What is that evidence that he established for them? The Syrian said:

“He is the Messenger of Allah. Then Hisham said, “ Then after the Messenger of Allah who? “ He answered, “The Book of Allah and the Sunnah (tradition of the Prophet of Allah (peace be upon him).” Hisham then said, “ Will the Book and Sunnah help us today, if we differ on some issues, that our differences will be terminated, and we will agree among ourselves?

The Syrian said, “Yes Then Hisham said to him, “ Why do we differ we and you and you came to us from Syria, opposing us, and you claim that personal opinion is the way of establishing religious issues, and you admit that opinion will not lead to one statement being accepted by opposing parties.”

The Syrian became silent, like the one thinking. Then Abu Abdullah said to him, “ Why are you not speaking? He replied, “If I said we did not differ, I am being haughty, and if I said, the Book and the Sunnah will raise our differences, I have lost, because the two can be interpreted differently. But I have also to ask him.”

Abu Abdullah said, “ Ask him, you will find him up to the task.”

The Syrian then said to Hisham: “Who is more concerned with the creation, their Lord or themselves?

Hisham replied: Their Lord is more concerned. “Then the Syrian said, “ Has he established for them, who will settle their differences and clear their misunderstandings, and explain to them what is right and what is wrong? He replied, ‘yes’, then the Syrian said: “Who is that?

Hisham then replied: “ At the inception of the shari'ah, it was the Messenger of Allah, and after the Prophet, it is someone else. The Syrian said, “ Who is that, other than the prophet who will stand in his place with a similar evidence?”

Hisham said: "In this our time or before it?" He replied, "No in this our time."

He said: "This man sitting, (i.e. Abu Abdullah) to whom people travel (to see him). And he tells us of the news from Heavens, as a heritage from forefathers."

The Syrian said; "How can I know that?" Hisham replied: "Ask him what you want". The Syrian then said, "I excuse myself, so ask me". Abu Abdullah then said to him: "I will tell you of your journey and travail – You set out on so-so day--- and your route was so and so, and so and so passed by you. The Syrian accepted whatever was described for him of his affairs saying. "By Allah you have spoken the truth." (16)

There is another narration mentioned by Saduq in a long debate that took place in a later date between Hisham, Dirar and Abdullah bin Yazid al-Ibadi in the courtroom of the Abbasid vizier Yahya bin Khalid al-Barmaki.

Dirar said to Hisham, "How is Imamate established and confirmed? Hisham replied: "As Allah established Prophethood."

Hisham then said: "So he is a Prophet? Then said: "No, because Prophethood is established by the Beings in heavens, and Imamate is established by the people of the earth. So the ratification of Prophethood is by the angels, and the ratification of the Imam is by the Prophet (peace be upon him). The two are established by the will of Allah".

Dirar then said: What evidence do you have for that?

Hisham replied: The necessity of this issue is...because there can be only three ways in it. Either that Allah has waived (responsibility) (taklif) from the creations after the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), that he no more commands them or prohibits them from doing anything, and they have become similar to wild beast and other animals, which are not responsible. Or that people, after the Prophet (peace be upon him) have acquired knowledge similar to that of the Prophet, to the extent that one is not in need of the other, so that they will all be self-sufficient, and attain the truth without any differences among them.

Only the third option remains, which is that they are in need of others, because there must be knowledge to be established by the Messenger for them, in such a way that, he neither forgets, nor errs, nor deviates. He will be infallible and protected from sins, free of errors, one who all need, but who needs none.

He said: "What is the evidence for that?"

Hisham answered "Eight evidences four are features of his lineage and four are his personal features. As for the four features from his lineage (descent), he will be from a known race and a well-known tribe and a well-known household, and that the Prophet pointed to him. There has never been a race in this creation as famous as the Arabs, of whom was the Prophet (peace be upon him). If it was permissible that the evidence from Allah (Imam) for His creation can be from any other race of the non-Arabs, and it would have been that what Allah wanted to be a source of good will is a source of corruption. This will not be compatible with the wisdom and justice of Allah, that He imposes on mankind an obligatory duty that does not exist. As this is not permissible, so it is not permissible that (the Imam) will be from other than this race, due to his relation with the prophet. It is also

not permissible that he will be of this race, if he will not be from this tribe, due to its close relation to the Prophet (peace be upon him), which is Quraish. As it is not permissible that he will be from this race, except that he is from this tribe, in similar ways, it will not be permissible that he (the Imam) will be from this tribe, except that he is from this household, for its close relation with the Prophet (peace be upon him). And as the members of this household, are many, and have quarreled on the issue of Imamate, due to its lofty position, with each one of them claiming it for himself, so it is not permissible except that the Prophet points to him in person, and by his name and his descent, so that all others will be excluded from claiming it.

As for the four personal features of (the Imam), they are that, he will be the most knowledgeable person as regards Allah's injunctions and precepts, so that nothing small or big will be obscured to him; and that he should be free from all sins (infallible); and he should be the bravest of men, and the most generous of them.

Abdullah bin Yazid al-Ibadi then said: " Why do you say that he (the Imam) will be the most knowledgeable of all men?"

Hisham said: "That is because if he is not conversant with all the injunctions, precepts and laws of Allah, we cannot be secured that he will not change the injunctions of Allah, so that anyone who commits an offence will not be punished accordingly, if it involves cutting up his hand, he will not execute it: so that he does not establish the limits of Allah on what He has commanded, being in the long run, a source of corruption instead of reform as Allah wishes.

Then he said, " How do you say that he is free from sins?"

He replied: "This is because if he were not free from sins, he will fall into error, so we cannot be secured that he will conceal what he has done, or conceal his friend or relation: and Allah will not set this person as his evidence on His creation."

He then further asked:" How do you say that he (the Imam) is the bravest of people?" Hisham replied: " This is because that group of Muslims who will resort to him in wars, Allah says " And whoever turns his back to them on such a day—unless it is a stratagem of war, or to retreat to a troop of his own he indeed has drawn upon himself wrath from Allah.... So if he were not brave, he will draw the wrath of Allah on himself. It is not permissible that the one who draws Allah's wrath will be Allah's evidence upon his creation."

Abdullah further asked him." How do you say that he is the most generous of people? He replied: " Because he is the keeper of Muslims treasures. For if he were not generous, his soul will crave for their wealth and he will take it, and that will be breach of trust: and it is not permissible that Allah will present a cheat as His evidence on His creation.(17)

Sheikh Saduq reported in his 'Amali, a speech of Hisham bin al-Hakam on the philosophy of infallibility (Ismah), from Muhammad bin Abi Umair who said: "I have never heard nor ever benefited from Hisham bin Hakam during my long companionship of him, better than this speech on the features of Imam's infallibility. One day I asked him about the

Imam. Is he infallible?" He replied "yes." Then I said to him. " What is the nature of infallibility in him and by what can it be known? He replied:

" All sins have only (four) causes there is no more. It is either due to greed or envy or anger or desire. These are not attributable to him. It is not permissible that he will be covetous of this world, as it is under his control, as he is the keeper of the treasures of Muslims, then why should he have greed for anything? It is also not permissible that he will be envious of one above him, and there is none above him, then how can he be envious of one below him? It is also not permissible that he will be angry on anything of this world, except if it is for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. Allah has made it incumbent upon him to establish the limits of Allah (the penalties), and the blame of blamers will not deter him from that, nor pity will make him shy away from the punishment prescribed by Allah, until he establishes those punishments. It is not permissible for him to follow desires and prefer this world to the hereafter, because Allah has made him to love the hereafter as he has made him to love this world. Have you ever seen anyone who left what is better, for a something good, or a soft and smooth garment for a coarse one or an ever-testing bliss for a transient one? (18)

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DIVINE IMAMATE

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The theory of Imamate says: Imamate is a divine affair and the appointment of a new Imam is made through the intervention of Allah, and there is no room for the wish of the former Imam in that. Amr bin Ash'ath said that he heard Imam Sadiq saying: "It seems that you think this affair is in the hands of one of us, He (Allah) places it where He wishes! No by Allah, it is a covenant from the Messenger of Allah which names a man then another, till it reaches its owner." (19)

Isma'il bin Ammar said that he once asked Abu al-Hassan, the first (Kadhim) about the Imamate: " Is it an obligation from Allah that the Imam must give a will and a covenant (for the one to come after him) before he leaves this world?" He replied "Yes" Then he said, Is it an obligation from Allah? " He answered: "Yes". (20)

Yahya bin Malik said that he asked Imam Rida on the statement of Allah, the Exalted: " Verily! Allah commands that you should render back the trusts to those to whom they are due".

He replied: The Imam return it to the Imam." Then he said: "O Yahya by Allah it is not from him (the Imam), but it is an affair from Allah". (21)

These are the most important abstracts in theology that has reached us from the first Imamate generation, which initiated theological discourse on Imamate, infallibility, text and will, as mentioned by the scholars who studied Twelver-Imam Shiites personalities, like, al-Kashi, Najashi, Saduq, Mufid, Tusi and Hilli. Other later theologians like al-Fadl bin Shadhan bin Khalil al-Azdi al-Nisapuri (who died in the middle of the third century of Hijrah). He wrote a number of works namely, 'Masa'il fi al-Imamah', 'Kitab al-Imamah al-Kabir' 'Al-Khisal fi al-Imamah', 'Fadl al-Muminin' and 'Kitab al-Qa'im', and Al- Rawandi, the author of

'Al-Imamah' and Thubait bin Muhammad Abu Muhammad Askari, the companion of Abu Isa Al-Warraq, he was al-Hilli described him, 'an intelligent theologian, and that the book attributed to Abu Isa al-Warraq was written by him,' Fadl bin Abd Rahman, Abu Sahl Ismail bin Ali Nukhbati (d. 290 A.H) Abu Ja'far Abdul Rahman bin Qubbah (he died in the middle of the 4th century of Hijrah), the writer of 'Al-Insaf wa al-Intisaf fi Al-Imamah', Sharif Murtada (d. 441 A.H), the writer of 'Kitab al-Shafi fi al-Imamah' and other works.

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF INFALLIBILITY

The philosophy of infallibility (of the Imam) is based on the concept of absolute obedience of those in authority, and its not being relative, like refuting what the Imam said or refusing to obey him in disobedience (of Allah), and in vices if he commands that; or correcting him when his disobedience (fisq) for Allah is apparent; and when he strayed from the path (of guidance). This was the same concept that the Umayyad rulers were busy spreading, as they were demanding the Muslims to obey them in absolute terms, in what is good or evil. And this is what led the Shiite philosophers and theologians to in-consistency as regards the necessity of obeying Allah, who commands the believers to obey those in authority in the verse: "O you who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you..." and the necessity of absolute obedience of the rulers, even if that involves vices and the impermissible.

Therefore, these Imamate theologians assert the necessity of the Imam any Imam being made infallible by Allah, so that he will not command what constitute disobedience to Allah, and so as not to make Muslims contradict themselves in obeying him in what involves the disobedience of Allah, or disobeying the Imam in that case despite Allah's command to obey him.

Sheikh Tusi said in 'Talkhis al-Shafi': "What indicates the necessity of the Imam being infallible is what has been established of his being an example to be emulated. Don't you see that he has been called Imam due to that? Imam is one to be emulated, due to this, it was said that the Imam in prayer must be emulated and followed... There is also a consensus among the Muslims that the Imam is to be followed in all aspects of the Shari'ah, even if they differ in the mode of appointing him. If it is established that he is to be followed in all aspects of Shari'ah, it is necessary that he is infallible (ma'sum). Because if he is not infallible, we cannot be secured in some of his actions, in which he might command us to kill some people; or to take the wealth of some, and the like, which are evil. It is incumbent on us to agree with him, by emulating him. It is not permissible that the Wise will make it compulsory on us emulating what is evil. If that is not permissible on Him to do that, that proves that the One whose obedience he has imposed is free from contracting evil, no one is like that except the infallible."

Sheikh Tusi rejected the concept of relative obedience saying. "If it said: Why do you deny that the emulation of the Imam is compulsory in what we know to be good, and as for that we know to be evil, or we doubt its true position, in that case his emulation is not incumbent! It will be said to him: This will deny the meaning of emulation completely, and

will turn it from its purpose.... And it will necessarily follow that the Imam himself is following his subjects in this regard. The contradiction this can lead to is evident.

Sheikh Mufid said in 'Al-Nukat al-l' tiqadiyyah': "The evidence for the necessity of the Imam being infallible is: if it is permissible for him to commit sins, and correcting him becomes compulsory he loses his status in the hearts, and he will not be emulated. The purpose of appointing him is so that he will be emulated and followed, so the purpose will be defeated. And if it is not compulsory to correct him, the necessity of prohibiting vice or evil is denied. This is null and void. He is the preserver of the law, if he were not infallible, his addition to or deletion (of the law) cannot be guaranteed." (23)

Imamate Shiites believe that the Imams are like Prophets (peace be upon them) on the necessity of their being infallibles, as regards all vices and all kinds of disobedience from childhood to old age to death, intentionally or unintentionally, because they are the preservers of the law and those establishing it, similar to the position of a Prophet. Because the need for Imam, is such that the oppressed can get his right from the oppressor, and also for the annihilation of corruption and putting an end to strife (fitnah) .The Imam is compassionate, he prevents the powerful from transgressing, and encourages people to obey the commandments of Allah, and abstain from His prohibitions. He establishes the limits of Allah, and his obligations. He seizes the disobedient ones and gives corrective punishment to those who deserve it. If disobedience is possible in his case, and he committed such an act, all these benefits will be denied, and there will be a need for another Imam to infinity." (24)

THE NECESSITY OF A DIVINE SCHOLAR WHO INTERPRETS THE QURAN

In addition to the issue of obedience and the necessity of the leader being infallible, some theologians look at the philosophy of infallibility from another angle, i.e. the necessity of the need for an interpreter of the Great Quran under the pretext of the inability of the Muslims in dealing with the Quran and benefiting from it directly. Kulayni reported in Al-Kafi the oldest tradition in this philosophy from Mansur bin Hazim who said: " I said to the people " Do you know that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) was Allah's evidence to His creation? They said: " yes." I said after that" After the demise of the messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), who was the evidence on Allah's creation? They answered " The Quran". I looked to the Quran and observed that the Murji'ite, the Qadarite and the infidel (Zindiq) all present it as their evidence, in a way that they overcome their opponents, and then I understand that the Quran can never be evidence without a custodian. Whatever he says on anything it is the truth. I then said to them: " Who is the custodian of the Quran? They replied: " Ibn Mas'ud is knowledgeable, so also Umar and Hudhayfah". I said: "All of it? " They said " No I have never found anyone said to know its entirety except Ali. Bear witness that Ali was the custodian of the Quran. (25).

After that other philosophers and theologians came and added to that and extended the Hadith in this sphere. Sayyid Murtada said in 'Al-Shafi': "The Imam must be knowledgeable in all the injunctions of Allah without exception, otherwise, it necessitates that he will be made custodian of what he has no means of, and that will mean imposing on him what he cannot bear. That, which confirms the necessity of the Imam being knowledgeable in the entire injunctions, is what has been reported that, the Imam is the leader in all aspects of religion, and the executor of all judgments, big or small delicate or ambiguous. It is not possible that for him not be knowledgeable in all aspects of religion and injunctions." (26)

Sheikh Tusi said: It has been established that not all that was needed in the Shari'ah, is based on absolute evidence from consensus or Ijma' or the like. Not all the evidences in many cases can be argued in both ways ... If that has been confirmed and Shari'ah and its application has been imposed on us, then there must be an authority through whom we can reach the truth, in any issue wherein there are conflicting opinions. That is the Imam we are advocating." (27)

He also said: "It is established that the Imam is the leader in all aspects of religion, and the one executing all judgments, all rulings, delicate or manifest or obscured. It is not possible that he will not know the entire injunctions." That is his attribute, because what is established in the sight of those who possess intellect is the evilness of giving the affair to one who does not know it, even if those who appointed him have a way of possessing the like of his knowledge of what he rules. There is no effect to the possibility of his learning and his having access to the way of knowledge. That is because, even though that is possible, his leadership cannot be right, if he lacks knowledge of what has been given over to him." (28)

Sheikh Tusi puts as a necessary condition for the Imam prior knowledge of everything, as he rejected dependence on Ijtihad as regards what will happen in the future or when there will be need for it. He said: " If it were said, why shouldn't the Imam be not knowing the entire injunctions related to his rule, only to resort to using juristic analogy (Ijtihad) whenever he needed to pass a judgment, or he resorts to narrations from singular reporters, or even he asks scholars, just as the ordinary person refers to them, or that he withdraws from what he has no knowledge of till it becomes apparent and clear to him through one of the means of acquiring knowledge. All this constitutes an accepted way of worshipping Allah."

It will be replied: "This is the statement of one who thinks that we only show as evil the leadership of the Imam who has no complete knowledge of all injunctions, because he has no other means of knowledge. We have explained that the existence of such means is like its non-existence if the knowledge attributed to Allah is not available. Definitely this kind of leadership is evil due to the lack of knowledge. There is no need for us to discuss what they consider means of acquiring knowledge which the Imam can resort to. This is because, even if it is ascertained that all of them are means to knowledge and learning, the injunction will not affect what we have certified. In real fact, most of what the questioner mentioned, will not lead to true knowledge in our view? As for Qiyas (analogical deduction), narrations from singular reporters and Ijtihad, as explained earlier, they do not constitute sources of knowledge in our view, and so cannot be a means of worshipping Allah. As for the resorting

of the ordinary person to the scholar, to us it is not possible for him to emulate anyone else, but it is necessary for him to seek for knowledge by the means that lead to true knowledge. If that is permissible his case will not be like the Imam. This is because that was permissible only due to his not being a ruler over him (or one having authority over him). So it is necessary that he follow the scholar and act upon that. We only show the evil of presenting the one without knowledge for his being the authority in all affairs. We will never permit that because of his being ignorant of some of (the affairs). As we do not in accordance with our principles permit that the rulers resort to the scholars, then they judge based on that, as is allowed by our opponents, due to the reason mentioned above.” (29)

THE MOST SUITABLE AND THE SUITABLE

Besides infallibility and divine knowledge seen by Imamate thought as necessary qualities in the Imam to be emulated, there are other qualities for the Imam also. That is he must be the best of the Muslims, as the Imamate of the suitable is not permitted in the presence of the most suitable. He must also be the bravest of men and the most generous. Sheikh Tusi says: “The Imam must be better than all his subjects, i.e. he must excel in rewards from Allah, and also be better than them all in all what he leads them.” (30)

He also said: “It is necessary that the Imam should be braver than all his followers, and all what follows of that quality that affirms his being their leader, in what pertains to fighting the enemies, which involves bravery. He must be the most powerful of them in that. This is because, the head is usually better than the followers whom he leads, as we have shown of the evil of preferring the better over the best, in what he is better than him. On his being the most authoritative and powerful, this comes from the law itself, because the name of Imam is given to only that one that above whom there is no leader or head. On his being the most understanding and rational, this is because, he has to have the best of opinions in any issue, due to being the most knowledgeable in policy and administration.” (31)

Sayyid Murtada says “ That which makes it necessary for the Imam to be the best in pious acts and rewards, as well as in knowledge and all other kinds of virtues related to religion, above all his subjects, i.e. in the virtues wherein he leads them, is what we and all rational people know of the evil of making the better in a particular virtue the leader and head of the best in that. The Imam is our leader in all aspects of religion, its knowledge and injunctions, then it is necessary that he will be better than us in all that.” (32)

FROM INFALLIBILITY... TO (DIVINE) TEXT

After affirming the necessity of describing the Imam, any Imam, in terms of infallibility, and of being the best in knowledge, bravery and generosity, and the non-permissibility of the Imamate of the fallible and the ignorant or the better (in the presence of the best), and since there is no way of knowing this except through divine guidance, the

Imamate thought rested on the principle of abandoning ' Shura' as a means of choosing an Imam. This principle was substituted with the idea of the (divine) text or the will or miracles from the unseen, which distinguish the Imam chosen by Allah from all other humans.

Sheikh Mufid says: "The Imam must be knowledgeable in all injunctions needed by the Ummah, and the most religious of all his followers. If these fundamentals are available, it is incumbent on him to declare himself to his subjects through a text (decree), and an extraordinary and miraculous knowledge. This is because there is no way of knowing anyone who possesses these qualities except through a text from the truthful, which he himself received from Allah or through a miracle". (33)

Sayyid Murtada also says: " If it has been established that the Imam must be knowledgeable in all the injunctions, it becomes impossible to elect him, but rather there must be a (divine) text on (his being) the Imam. This is because those who will elect him are not knowledgeable in all the injunctions, then how is it possible to choose the one with this quality? "He also says: " If it has been established that the Imam is our leader in all (aspects of) religion, and its knowledge and injunctions, It becomes necessary that he will be better than all of us in all that. And in his being the most pious and religious, comes the necessity of a clear text on him, as this cannot be reached through (mere) election." (34)

He also says: "Know that our belief on the necessity of the (divine) text and its indispensable nature as regards the Imamate, has already been explained above, and that is enough to show that election is invalid. This is because anything that has been established by the text itself that vitiates or nullifies election. Know that that which we depend on, on the invalidity of the election of the Imam, is the exposition of his qualities, which the electorate have no evidence on, and it is not possible to know that through rational thinking or 'Ijtihad' and these are limited to All-knowing Allah, like infallibility, superiority in righteous acts and rewards, and knowledge above all the Ummah. There is no ambiguity that these qualities cannot be grasped through elections, except by means of a (divine) text. We did explain also that it is not possible to assert the validity of election, when we consider the qualities...We also said: that is an invalid instruction, on the basis that one is commanded to do something wherein he has nothing to guide him to it, and no authority to distinguish the compulsory act from what is not."(35)

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF IMAMATE THEORY

Imamate thought has developed from the Imamite Shiites' statement on the necessity of infallibility on the part of the Imam, any Imam, to the necessity of the existence of a (divine) text on him, as the only way of identifying him. This invalidates the system of Shura (consultation) and election. It further confines the Imams to the infallibles of Ahl al-Bayt, beginning with Imam Ali bin Abi Talib, Hassan and Hussain, and then the Imams from the line of Hussain, those Allah appointed as leaders of creation to the day of resurrection."

The Imamate school of thought presents as evidence of the 'infallibility' of the members of the Prophet's household, the following Quranic verse: "Allah wishes only to remove evil deeds and sins from you, O members of the family (of the Prophet) (peace be upon him)." (Ahzab) i.e. by interpreting wish (iradah) to mean creational wish not legislative wish, because it is impossible that the divine wish will fail to remove evil deeds from them. Allah the Most High has said: "Verily, His command, when He intends a thing is only that He says to it, "be" and it is. The thought also excluded the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him) from the rank of Members of the family of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and confining (that honor) to Imam Ali and Fatimah and their children. (1)

The Imamate historian Sa'id bin Abdullah Al-Qummi al-Ashari has reported to us the precise form of this thought in his work, 'Al-Maqalat wa al-firaq' where he says: Imam Ali bin Abi Talib is Imam whose obedience has been imposed by Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) as a duty on mankind, to accept him and receive (instructions) from him. Anyone other than him is not their valid leader. Any one who obeys him, obeys Allah, and anyone who disobeys him, disobeys Allah, due to the sign the messenger of Allah has established for them and the imposition of his Imamate and leadership and his deserving right more than that of their own souls. The Prophet has also endowed him (Ali) with the knowledge that will be needed by humanity in religion, the permissible and the prohibited and all what benefits them in the religious and worldly life, as well as whatever harms them, and all kinds of knowledge, little or great, he left it as a trust with him, as well as being its custodian.

"And that he deserves the Imamate and the position of the Prophet, due to his infallibility and the purity of his birth, as well as being among the pioneers (in accepting Islam), his knowledge, his bravery, jihad, generosity, asceticism and justice among his followers. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has mentioned through a text by his name and lineage and person. He handed over to him the Imamate of the Ummah he established him as a sign, and made him the benefactor of his will and his vicegerent, as well as his vizier on many occasions. He (the prophet peace be upon him) told them that his position to him was like the position of Harun to Musa, except that there is no Prophet after him. Since he makes him his equal in his life, then he is the most deserving of them

after his death, just as he was more deserving of them than their own selves, as he made him similar to himself in the Mubalah (invoking Allah's curse on whoever is not truthful), in the statement of Allah... "Ourselves and yourselves..." and also in the statement of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) to the children of Wali'ah "Otherwise I will send to you a man like myself." The position of the Prophet will not be due for anyone after him except such as was like him. The Imamate is the most exalted of affairs after prophet hood, as it is one of the most esteemed of the obligatory duties from Allah. If the obligatory duties cannot be established, nor accepted, except with the existence of a just Imam and since it is necessary that, that Imamate must continue always in his progeny till the day of resurrection, it will be in his children from Fatimah, the daughter of the Messenger of Allah, and then in his grandchildren from her, a man from them will always take his position forever. He will be infallible of sins, purified from all defects, pious, pure, and free of all ailments in religion, lineage and birth. One who cannot err intentionally or unintentionally, specifically mentioned by text from the Imam preceding him, one pointed by his name and person... and that the Imamate will continue in his progeny in this way, as long as mankind follow the commandments of Allah." (2)

The Imamate scholars who grew up in the beginning of the second century of Hijrah have tried to draw back their theory, and to read the Shiite political history anew, in the light of their theory based on (the idea of) a text (nass), and the abandoning of the previous Shiite political thought which was based on (the idea of) Shura (consultation).

They naturally attributed their thought to the members of the family (of the Prophet (peace be upon him) – Ahl al-Bayt and claimed taking it from them. This is why Sheikh Mufid said the following: "Alawite Shiites have agreed that the Imamate at the time of the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him) was for the commander of the faithful Ali bin Abi Talib, and that it was for Hassan bin Ali after his brother. And that after Hussain it will be for the children of Fatimah (peace be upon her) not leaving them to other people. None other than them deserves it. They are the right people for it, to the end of time. And that it is the exclusive right of the children of Hussain, it will not leave to some other people till the hour (of judgment)". (3)

THE TEXT IN PLACE OF THE WILL

Contrary to the Kissanite thought which depend on the Prophets will for Imam Ali, the Imamate thought has depended largely on the subject of 'Ghadir' and found in it a strong evidence with political meaning, and a text for the Caliphate. Sheikh Mufid says in 'Al-Ihsah fi Imamah 'Ali bin Abi Talib: "The Prophet (peace be upon him) has bestowed to Imam Ali at the Ghadir (Small Stream) of 'Khoum' proper leadership, and showed how he resembles him in the necessity of obeying him, so also his commanding, prohibiting and organizing their affairs and his leadership of them ... He confirmed his superiority over the others in the community, as well as his support and viziership and Caliphate in his life and after his (the Prophet's) death. (4)

In addition to that, they depended on some textual evidences on the virtue of Imam Ali bin Abi Talib, and others, which clearly confirm his leadership and Imamate. But all these were from Shiite reporters. It has always been suspected as being fabricated or given strained or forced meaning contrary to the apparent one, as well as reading political meaning in those traditions.

Sayyid Murtada has confessed in his work 'Al- Shafi fi al- Imamah', that the most important Prophetic tradition regarding the Imamate, is the Hadith of Ghadir of Khoum' and that it is a covert not an overt text, if we dropped the additions made to it. (5)

Despite the denial of the Imamate theologians of the Imamate of those claimed it for themselves like Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah and Abdullah Al-Aftah, due to lack of clear texts on that, and despite the statement of Sheikh Mufid on the impermissibility of establishing the Imamate of any one on whom there is no text or evidence confirming his Imamate, because infallibility can only be known through a text—as Sheikh Mufid and Tusi have said (6)--- Despite all these, the Imamate historians were not able to establish any textual (evidence) on the Imamate of the others, especially that of Imam Ali bin Hussain, who served as a link between Imam Hussain and the remaining Imams to the day of judgment. This has led the theorizers of divine Imamate to depend on other means apart from the text in establishing the Imamate of the remaining Imams, like the will, reason, miracle and so on. (7)

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REASON IN PLACE OF THE TEXT

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Hence due to the weakness of the texts reported by the Imamate Shiite regarding the Caliphate of the members of the Prophet's family, the earlier theologians have in the first place depended on reason (aql) in establishing their theory. Sheikh Mufid says: " If one of the opponents will say that the texts being reported by the Imamate Shiites are fabricated, fabricated, and the traditions were reported by single reporters, otherwise let them mention their chains of narrators and affirm their authenticity in a manner that will not leave any doubt.... It will be said to him: "It is of no effect to the Imamate Shiites in their belief explained above, the lack of consensus regarding the texts for the Imams. Its being traditions reported by single reporters does not disqualify it from being evidences for them, due to what accompany it of rational evidences, we have mentioned and explained on the necessity of the Imamate and the attributes of the Imams. This is because if rational evidences are invalid as the opponents imagine, the rational evidences establishing the necessity of texts for confirming the Imams will also be invalid, as we have explained." (8)

Sayyid Murtada says in Al- Shafi: "We have two ways of establishing the Imamate of the remaining Imams. Firstly by referring to clear reports of Shiites, which constitute evidences, the Prophets text wholly or partly, and what has been reported from the leader of the faithful and the text of each one of them on the one succeeding him. Secondly by depending on rational arguments based on logical principles in establishing the Imamate of anyone of them, without recourse to tradition." (9)

The same thing was said by Abu Al-Fath Muhammad bin Ali Al-Jarajiki in his book, 'Al-Istinsar fi al-Nass ala Aimah al- Athar': " Know that, may Allah help you, that Allah, the Exalted has made easy for Shiite scholars different rational and traditional evidences on the validity of the Imamate of the members of the Prophets family, such that can establish proofs against their opponents. The rational arguments establish the principle of the necessity of the need for the Imam in every age, and his known attributes like infallibility, which distinguish him from the entire members of the Ummah, such attributes are not available in other than the one pointed to (by

Allah). As for the traditional evidences, we have the Quran which points generally to their leadership and superiority over other beings.” (10)

MIRACLES IN PLACE OF REASON

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If the theory of Imamate presents some texts as regards Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (peace be upon him), it admits the lack of it as regards a number of the other Imams. And for this reason they sometime depend on ordinary wills, and take them as evidences instead of the text. They lack sometime even ordinary wills, and for some they resort to the miraculous, in place of the texts.

Hisham bin al-Hakam established his statement on the Imamate of Sadiq, on the claim of the knowledge of the Imam regarding the unseen (ghayb). He said to the Syrian man who debated with him on the Imamate at Muna, “ the miracle is the means of identifying the Imam, and confirming the truth of his claim.” He never mentions the issue of the text at all. If the text was an essential requirement, the earlier Imamate theologians could have depended on it, and Hisham would have brought it up as evidence on the Imamate of Imam Sadiq, or at least point to it. He did not however, say anything on it, except the evidence of the miraculous and the Imam’s knowledge of the unseen.

Of the quotations from the scholars cited above, there is a pointer to the evidence of the miraculous. Sheikh Mufid has said in ‘Al-Thaqalan’ after the discussion on the condition of infallibility of the Imam. “ If these principles have been established, it becomes necessary for the Imam to declare to the people, through a text on his Imamate, and through miraculous knowledge, as there is no way of knowing the one who possesses all these qualities except through a true text from Allah, the Almighty or a miracle.” Sayyid Murtada has also said in ‘Al-Shafi’ after discussion on infallibility; “If that has been established, it becomes necessary to declare it either through a text or a miracle.” Sheikh Tusi has said in Talkhis Al- Shafi: “The provision of the text on the Imam or what may stand for it of the miracle that confirms his Imamate... It is necessary to have a text for the Imam in person or presentation a miracle in its place, despite the validity of the statement above.”

Allamah Hilli also says in ‘Nahj al-Haq:’ “ The ways of appointing the Imam are two: Either through a text from Allah, the Exalted or His Prophet (peace be upon him) or an Imam, whose Imamate has been established through a text, or through the appearance of miracles from him.”

In truth, the Imamate theory is mainly in need of the subject of miracles, in the process of establishing the Imamate of Ali bin Hussain Al- Sajjad, who had no text or will from his father, as Imam Hussain was killed in Karbala without leaving a text on his Imamate. Imam Hussain only left a will for his sister Zaynab, or his daughter Fatimah, as mentioned by Imam Baqir and Sadiq. Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah did claim the possession of a will from his father. Imam Ali, and he headed the Shiites on the basis of that after the withdrawal of Imam Sajjad from the political arena.

The Imamate theory also needed to establish the Imamate of Sajjad for it to maintain Imamate in the children of Hussain only. Otherwise the claim will be broken and the argument of Kissanites and Hassanites, those who directly led the Shiites, will be stronger than that of the Imamate Shiites.

In this regard the Imamate Shiites used to report the conflict between Imam Sajjad and his uncle Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah who denied the existence of any text or will for him, and demand of him to follow him. Sajjad then sought from him that both should go to Al-Hajar al-Aswad (the BlackStone)for judgment, which talked miraculously and in very eloquent Arabic, establishing the Imamate of Sajjad demanding from Ibn Hanafiyyah to submit to him. As the Imamate Shiites, especially Abu Basir used to mention miraculous stories on the Imamate of Muhammad Baqir and Jafar Sadiq and Kadhim, as well as other Imam, So as to cover the lack of texts on their Imamates, or as support for ordinary wills, that do not point to the issue of Imamate and Caliphate.

Miracles are almost the principal evidences presented by the Imamate Shiites to establish the Imamate of a large number of Infallible Imams appointed by Allah, the Most high.

CONFINING THE IMAMATE TO THE CHILDREN OF HUSSAIN

After establishing the Imamate of both Hassan and Hussain, Imamate Shiites try to solve the issue of confining the Imamate to the progeny of Hussain exclusively. This is more so, because both of them were from the household of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and both were the children of Fatimah and Ali, and the children of Hassan have also claimed it for themselves. Some of them opined that the Awaited Mahdi would be from among them. Some of them even believed that the children of Hassan are superior to the children of Hussain, especially that the Hadiths that the Imamate Shiites put as evidence for confining the Imamate exclusively to the members of the Prophet's family, like the Hadith of Thaqalain, -- include both the households. The Jeroudites based their doctrine of the possibility of the Imam coming from the children of Hassan and Hussain on that Hadith (tradition)."

A narration from Khazzaz al-Qummi in 'Kifayah al-Athar' from Jabir bin Yazid al-Ja'fi expresses the rejection of a section of the early Shiites of the idea of confining the Imamate to the children Hussain. Jabir said to Imam Baqir: Some people say that Allah has placed the Imamate in the progeny of Hassan and Hussain" He replied: "By Allah, they have lied, have they not heard Allah the Almighty saying: " And he made it a word lasting among his offspring." Has he then placed it only in the line of Hussain?" (12)

Hisham bin Salim Al-Jawaliqi has claimed that he once asked Imam Sadiq: "How did the Imamate become only from the line of Hussain excluding the children of Hassan? He the replied " Allah wish to make the tradition of Musa and Harun continue in Hassan and Hussain have you not seen that the former two were both Prophets, just as the (latter) two were both co-partners, in the Imamate." (12)

Haran bin A'yun has reported from Imam Baqir a tradition, in which he said, "Hassan did return 40,000 swords back to their covers, when the Leader of the Faithful was attacked, and offered them to Mu'awiyah... and Hussain went out and gave himself for the sake of Allah, together with 70 (seventy) men ...who has more right to his blood, than us? (13)

There is another report from Abu 'Amr al-Zubairi wherein he says that, he asked Imam Sadiq about the secret behind the Imamate leaving the children of Hassan and being limited to the children of Hussain. How was it so? What is the evidence for that? He replied him: "When Hussain

faced Allah's decree, it was not permissible to turn it to the son of his brother, nor to make a will for them on it, Allah says: " And blood relations among each other have closer personal ties in the Decree of Allah..." So his children were closer to him than the children of his brother. Which means they have more right to the Imamate. This verse has excluded the children of Hassan from it, so it became for Hussain, going by the import of the verse. So it will be among them till the day of resurrection." (14)

It seems these justifications were neither convincing, nor strong, due to which the Shiites continued searching the secret behind confining the Imamate to the offspring of Hussain, despite the leadership of the children of Hassan of the Shiites in different places. Saduq says: Muhammad bin Abi Yaqub al-Balkhi asked Imam Rida: "For what cause the Imamate became in the children of Hussain, excluding the children of Hassan? He replied him saying: "Because Allah has made it in the offspring of Hussain, and not the offspring of Hassan, Allah will not be questioned on what He does."

It is evident that this reply came before the crystallization of the Imamate theory in the succeeding centuries, and its subsequent dependence on preconceived Hadith of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), which mention the names of the Imams one after the other. Despite the fact that Sheikh Saduq has reported this narration, it only seems that he did not trust this narration claimed to have come from Imam Rida, and this was why he had another view of the matter.

He says in Ikmal al-Din: "Know that when the Prophet (peace be upon him) advised (the Muslims) to hold fast to the family (of the Prophet), reason, common knowledge and the life history of the prophet (peace be upon him) all these confirm that he means the scholars among them, not the ignorant, and the pious among them and not otherwise. What is incumbent on us, is to look for anyone among them, who combined religious knowledge, with intellect, virtue, forbearance, asceticism, and independence in affairs, than we emulate him. If these qualities are found in two persons, and one of them accepts the doctrine of Zaydites and the other. The doctrine of the Imamate Shiites, we differentiate between them on the basis of clear evidence; Either a text from the preceding Imam, or something evident in his knowledge, or the doctrine of one of them will be known, which disqualifies him for being emulated, like the opinion of the Zaydites on Ijtihad and Qiyas (analogical deduction) in the obligatory duties and injunctions. It will be known on that, that they are not Imam."(16)

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VERTICAL INHERITANCE

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The Imamate Shiites believe that the Imamate extends in the offspring of Hussain only from the eldest to the next, as they believe also in the impossibility of transferring it to a brother or nephew or uncle or cousin.

They depended in this, on the verse " And blood relations among each other have closer personal ties in the Decree of Allah" which is based on the same verse they depend on the Imamate of the children of his brother, Hassan or any other of his brothers or cousins or all the other people. It is the right of the children of Hussain only and none else. It will never leave them to other than them till the hour (of judgment). (18)

Kulayni has reported, so also Saduq, Mufid and Tusi, traditions from Imam Sadiq, which point to the law of vertical inheritance and the continuation of the Imamate till the day of resurrection. He said: "The Imamate will not be in two brothers after Hassan and Hussain. But it will be in the off springs and off springs of off springs, and likewise to the day of resurrection." (19)

THE CONTINUATION OF THE IMAMATE TO THE DAY OF RESURRECTION

With the rejection of the theory of Shura (consultation)—on the part of the philosophers of the theory of Divine Imamate as a way of electing the Imam, it became necessary to extend this theory (of Imamate) from the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to the day of Resurrection. It will not be confined to a specific period of time. Hence we have Hisham bin Hakam in his debate with Dirar saying, "It is necessary that there must be in any period one possessing this attribute of infallibility till the hour (of judgment)". (20)

Abu Basir has reported from Abu Jafar (Baqir), that he said while interpreting the following verse: "O you who believe obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those of you who are in authority..." they are the Imams from the off springs of Ali and Fatimah till the time of the Hour." (21)

Ishaq bin Ghalib has reported from Abu Abdullah (Sadiq) in his sermon wherein he mentioned the qualities of the Imams and their attributes: "Allah has chosen them for His creation from the children of Hussain, from the off springs of each (earlier) Imam, He chose them and is pleased with them So that whenever an Imam will pass away, He appoints for His creation from his offspring an Imam." (22)

Sheikh Saduq has also said in the Introduction of his work 'Ikmal al-Din': "The purpose of citing the saying of the prophet (peace be upon him). "The two (the Book and the Family) will never separate till they come together to the pond (of the Prophet)" is to establish the matter of Allah's evidences to the day of resurrection, due to his statement of non-separation of the two till they come to the pond, similarly is his statement "Their similitude is like that of the stars, whenever one disappears, another one appears till the day of resurrection" this is a confirmation of our statement that the earth will never be devoid of Allah's evidence (Hujjah) for His creation." (23)

It was also reported from Rida that he said: "The first of those who learn lessons from the signs of Allah' (al- Mutawassimin) was the Messenger of Allah, then the Commander of the faithful

(Ali) after him, followed by Hassan, then Hussain and then the Imams from the children of Hussain till the day of resurrection.” (24)

It has also been reported from him, “The Imams are from the children of Ali and Fatimah to the end of time” (25)

Imamate leadership) belonged to the Messenger of Allah (peace is upon him), who handed it over to Ali, by the command of Allah in a pattern ordained by Allah. So it became in his chosen offsprings, those bestowed with knowledge and faith.... So it will be in the children of Ali exclusively, till the day of Judgment.” (26)

Based on the above, there was no predetermined list of the names of the subsequent Imams. That was left to the vicissitudes of time to determine. There are a number of Hadiths that show that the Imams do not know those to succeed them before, but they only know that in the last moments of their life. In this regard Saffar reported from Imam Sadiq that he once said: “The previous Imam will not die till Allah makes known to him to whom he will pass the will (of Imamate)...” And the succeeding Imam will know his Imamate in the last moment of the life of the previous Imam.” (27)

In view of the lack of a predetermined list of names of the Imams beforehand, the Imamate Shiites considered the issue of identifying the new Imam of great importance. Saffar says: “Harath bin Mughirah once asked Imam Sadiq: “By what do we know the owner of the affairs (Imam)?” He answered, “By tranquility, humility, knowledge and will.” (28)

Kulayni says: “Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Abi Nasr once asked Imam Rida, “If the Imam dies by what do we know the one to succeed him? He replied “The Imam has signs among which are: To be the eldest, to possess the will, and to go before the people and ask, to whom has so and so given the will? It will be said to so and so. And the weapon to us is like the ark to the children of Israel, Imamate will be wherever the weapon is. “In another narration, As for the knowledge of the (legal) matters there is no evidence on that.” (29)

Thus the Imamate Shiites used to ask the previous Imams on the identity of the succeeding Imams and used to insist on that. Many a times, the Imams refused them that knowledge. (30)

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WHAT SHOULD THE SHIITES DO WHEN IGNORANT OF THE IMAM (OF THE TIME)?

There are traditions that categorically declare the possibility of the Shiites not knowing the Imam, and it design for them what to do in such circumstances. Kulayni reported that a man once asked Abu Abdullah Saying: “ If it happens that I don’t find the Imam to follow that should I do? “ He replied, Love whom you love and hate whom you hate, till Allah cause him to appear.” (31)

Likewise Saduq has reported from Imam Sadiq that he said "What will you do when you remain for a long period of your life, not knowing your Imam?" It was said: "If that happens what shall we do?" He replied, "Hold onto the first one till he appears." (32)

All of Kulayni, Saduq and Mufid have reported a tradition from Isa bin Abdullah Al- Alawi from Abu Abdullah Ja'far bin Muhammad (peace be upon him) he said: "I said to him "May I be your ransom If you pass away, may Allah not show me that day—Whom should I follow (as Imam)? He pointed to Musa. I then said "If Musa passes away whom should I follow? He said, His son. "I said, "If his son passes away and left a big brother and a small son, whom should I follow (emulate)?" He replied "Follow his son, and in this manner, forever." I said to him "If I do not know him nor his place what should I do?" He said: "You should say: O Allah I follow whoever remain of your evidences (Imams) from the children of the gone Imam, that will suffice you." (33)

There is one other narration from Zurrarah bin A'yun, Ya'qub bin Shu'aib and Abd al-A'la, that once they asked Imam Sadiq. "If something happens to the Imam, what should the people do?" He replied "They should be as Allah has said: "Of every troop (group) of them, a party only should go forth that they (who are left behind) may get instructions in religion, and that they may warn their people, when they return to them, so that they may be aware (of evil)." I said, "What will be their condition." He replied, "They are excused." I then said, "May I be your ransom, what will be the condition of those waiting till the return of the learned? He said, "May Allah have mercy on you, were you not aware that there were 250 years between Muhammad and Isa (peace be upon him), some people died while confessing the religion of 'Isa (peace be upon him) and waiting for the religion of Muhammad, and so Allah gave them double reward." I said, "We have set forth and some of our people die on the way." He replied, "And whosoever leaves his home as an emigrant unto Allah and His Messenger and death overtakes him, his reward is then surely incumbent upon Allah..." I then said, "We then reached the city and we found the owner of the affairs (Imam) has closed his doors upon himself and has lowered his curtains..." He then said: "This affair is only through a clear evidence, i.e. when you enter the city, you shall say: "To whom did so and so pass his will (on Imamate)? They will reply: "To so-and -so."

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SECRECY IN THE THEORY OF IMAMATE

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We have seen in the previous chapter that the theory of Divine Imamate based on infallibility and text, was not widespread and was unknown in the midst of the Shiites and the members of the Prophets household themselves, in the first century of Hijrah. There was no sign of it in Madinah. It, in fact started underground from Kufah in the beginning of the second century. The theologians who started it were concealing it on the Prophet of the doctrine of 'insinuation'

Taqiyyah and non-disclosure (Kitman)... Abu Jafar al-Ahwal nick named Mumin al-Ta'q, a well-known theologian, and considered as a pioneer pillar of the theory, did admit that it was kept secret, and that even Zayd bin Ali was not aware of it. It surprised and also shocked him that Imam Sajjad did inform 'Mumin al-Ta'q' of it, but did not inform of (that theory). (35)

Despite the claim of Mumin al-Ta'q, of the theory being attributed and linked to the members of the Prophet's family, his statements do reveal the complete secrecy that surrounds the theory at the time of its inception in Kufah, to the extent that Zayd bin Ali bin Hussain was unaware of it, while he was in Madinah and in the laps of his father, and despite what he enjoyed of piety, knowledge, asceticism and the spirit of Jihad, even to the extent of his amazement when he heard the statement of Mumin al-Ta'q.

We have seen in the previous chapter, the clear denial of Imam Sadiq of the statement that the Imamate is imposed by Allah, which was reported by Kulayni in 'Al- Kafi. Hence, the Imamate Shiites used to conceal and cover their statements, which they attribute to the Imams in layers of secrecy, Taqiyyah and concealment. They claim that the Imams were not disclosing these opinions to the general masses. They only mentioned them in private, and they advised that it should be maintained in that form of concealment. They considered these traditions difficult, and cannot be borne except by true and reliable believers. And that the punishment of anyone spreading it among the people is death by sword." (36) 150

Muhammad bin Hassan Saffar has reported in his book, 'Basa'ir al-Darajat' a number of narrations being spread between the Imamate and extremist Shiites, in the necessity of secrecy and concealment, and the dangers of revealing and declaring (Secrets).

He wrote many chapters on that affair, and he narrated from Imam Baqir a statement to his companions: "If your tongues have ribbons (tied to them), I would have told each person what he has (of good or evil)." (37)

He (Saffar) also reported from Jabir bin Yazid Al- Ja'fari from Abu Abdullah who said: " Our affair is secret in secret, and a concealed secret in a concealed secret, a secret that must remain a secret, a secret upon a secret, and a secret covered by a secret." (38)

It has also been reported from Imam Sadiq his saying. "My father was a father far excellence. He used to say: "If I can get three people, to whom I will bestow knowledge as a trust, and they are qualified for that and deserve it. I would have mention what need not to be researched in the legal and non-illegal matters, and what will become of it till the day of Resurrection.... Our traditions are very difficult, no one believe in them, save those whose heart have been tested in faith (Iman)." (39)

He also said: " If not because of the fear that it will reach some people other than you, as part of it has already reached them, I would have given you a book, so that you will not need anyone till the custodian (qaim) appears." And he also said: "I do not find the one to talk to.... If not because of that I would discuss something with a man among you, who would not leave. Madinah, except that his two eyes will be brought (he would be killed), for that I will say: "I will not say it." (40)

Saffar also reported a narration from Abu Basir, who says in it, that he went to Imam Abu Abdullah to ask him on knowledge. He said I started by saying. "May I be your ransom I am asking about an issue, there is no one here who hears my statement."? He said that Abu Abdullah raised the curtain between himself and another house; he looked inside it and then said, " Ask what you wish." This shows the seriousness of the secrecy of the tradition. (41)

The theory of Imamate initially was based on the knowledge of the Imams regarding the unseen (Al-Ghayb), as a way of establishing the relationship between the Imam and Allah. We have seen that in the debate between Hisham bin Hakam and the Syrian that Hisham claimed that Imam Sadiq told him of all that happened on his way from Syria to Muna. But Imam Sadiq has always denied having the knowledge of the Unseen. He said in very clear terms " What a surprise for some people who claim that we know the Unseen. No one knows 'al-Ghayb' except Allah. I had

intended to beat my housemaid so and so, but she left me, I do not know now in which house she is. This narration was transmitted by Sadir, Abu Basir Maisir, Yahya al-Bazzaz and Dawud al-Ruqiy, who say that Imam Sadiq came to them angrily, and then he denied the knowledge of the Unseen. Sadir has added to this narration that, he went to the Imam in the company of Abu Basir and Maisir after he has left his seat and has gone inside his house. They said to him secretly, "May we be your ransom, we heard you saying so and so on your housemaid, and we know that you have vast knowledge." He said to them that, he has the knowledge of the Book. That the knowledge of this person in relation to the knowledge of the Imam is like a drop of rain water as compared to the great ocean." (42)

We can also discern secrecy or insinuation (Taqiyyah) in another narration transmitted by Saif al-Tammar, where he says: "We were one day with Abu Abdullah as a group of Shiites from 'al- Hijr' and he said: " Is there any spy with us?" We then turned right and left but did not see anyone. We then said to him. " There is no spy with us." Then he continued: " By the Lord of the Ka'bah and the Lord of the House (three times), if I were among Musa and Khidr, I would have told them I am more knowledgeable than them, and would have told them what would not be in their possession. This is because Musa and Khidr were given the knowledge of what had happened, but were not given the knowledge of what is going to happen to the day of Judgments. While the Messenger of Allah was given the knowledge of what happened and what is going to happen to the day of Resurrection, and we inherited it from the Messenger of Allah as inheritance. (43)

Despite the clear inconsistency in this tradition, which attributes the knowledge of the Unseen to Imam Sadiq, and which says at the same time that he initially asked of the presence of any spy around them, despite all this, it carries in it the meaning of secrecy contrary to what the Imam used to declare.

The Imamate Shiites termed this kind of act as 'Taqiyyah' so as to interpret the phenomenon of contradiction and inconsistency between the statements of the Imams from the Prophet's family

(Ahl al- Bayt) and their open day-to-day behavior, which was based on Shura and natural knowledge, and between the claim of divine Imamate, based on a text, appointment and divine knowledge of the unseen, which the Imamate Shiites were secretly attributing to the members of the Prophet's family. As the members of the Prophet's family vehemently denied such statements attributed to them, the Imamate Shiites and the esoteric (Batini) sects generally interpret their statements, and hold onto their claims contrary to these denials under the pretext of strong Taqiyyah.'

It is well known that Imam Sadiq did curse one of the extremists, who claimed divine nature for him. He dissociated himself from him. The name of that person was, Abu al-Khattab, the leader of Khattabiyyah set. When the Shiites told him of the position of the Imam regarding his belief, he interpreted the statement, saying that he was only referring to another man in Basrah called Qatadah al-Basri nicknamed Abu al-Khattab. When the Imam expressed whom he meant saying: "By Allah I meant none other than Muhammad bin Miqlas bin Abi Zaynab, the leper the servant of Banu Asad", Abu al- Khattab said: "Surely Abu Abdullah intended by cursing us openly, cursing our opponents, in secret." He interpreted Allah's statement: " As for the ship, it belonged to poor people working in the sea. So I wished to make a defective damage in it, as there was a king behind them who seized every ship by force." Kahf, as meaning that the ship stands for Abu al-Khattab and the poor people being his companions, and the king behind them connotes Isa bin Musa the Abbasid." (44)

Due to the above it became obligatory to maintain 'Taqiyyah' as a condition for the continuation of the Imamate theory and for linking it to the members of the Prophet's family.

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE THEORY OF IMAMATE IN THE FACE OF CHALLENGES

CRITIQUE OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF INFALLIBILITY

Immediately the theory of divine Imamate was born it faced a series of challenges, which put it to the litmus test. Those challenges establish its impossibility. On the one hand, the doctrine of infallibility ('Ismaah), upon which it is based, was a new theory, rejected by the members of the Prophets family and the generality of the Shiites.

That was because the philosophy of infallibility was based on the principle of absolute obedience of those in authority, with little or no room for relativity in this regard, like refuting a statement of the Imam or disobeying him in vices and in what is not permissible, as long as he commands so, or withholding him when his disobedience (fisq) is evident.

This was the same principle that was championed by the impious rulers of the Umayyads, who pressed the Muslims on the basis of that, to obey them in absolute terms in good and evil. This was what led the Imamate Shiite philosophers to inconsistency and contradiction, between the necessity of obeying Allah, the exalted,

who commands us to obey also those in authority in the glorious verse “O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you...” and the necessity of obeying the rulers in absolute terms even in vices and the impermissible. (1)

It has been established that the verse should be conceived in absolute terms, which can also be understood in relative terms. In fact, this latter opinion is what can be grasped and established on the basis of customs, reason and other Quranic verses, which emphasizes the principle of “there is no obedience to the created in what involves the disobedience of the creator.”

Even though the verse of ‘those in authority’ applies to the rulers being appointed by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in his life, the early Muslims, did not believe that it is in absolute terms, including their obedience even in what involves evil and disobedience. A group of Muslims did refuse to obey a man appointed to head an expedition by the Prophet (peace be upon him), when he ordered the group to enter the fire he has kindled, and demanded from them to obey him. And they said to him, ‘we have escaped from fire, how can we enter it again? They understood obedience to be within the limits of custom, common sense and the law, and not outside them. They returned and narrated what happened to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and he confirmed them on their rational stand. He warned them also saying: “If you had entered it, you would have remained in it (forever).”

This further supports the possibility of understanding Quranic verses in relative terms, within the limits of reason, what is known, the life history of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the law, and the impermissibility of understanding them always in absolute terms, even in cases where that contradicts other injunctions, rational or legal.

If absoluteness is lacking and relativity is established in obeying those in authority', then there will be no need for making the infallibility (Ismah) of the Imam a condition. It will be possible for the Muslims to choose their leader, on the basis of apparent justice, piety and the ability to implement for them the religion, and to command the right and prohibit the wrong. If and when this leader will deviate, they have the right to disobey him, and reject his commands, and even oust him from the post of Imamate. Allah will not impose his obedience on them.

However, the Imamate Shiite theologians have totally rejected the theory of relativity, and they insist on the idea of absoluteness in the verse mentioned above. Due to this, they build their idea of ismah (infallibility) on this foundation. They later established all their other doctrines on the basis of infallibility. (2)

THE POSITION OF MEMBERS OF THE PROPHET'S FAMILY (AHL AL BAYT) ON INFALLIBILITY.

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The greatest problem faced by the Imamate philosophers in the process of constructing the doctrine of divine Imamate, of the Imams of the 'Ahl al-Bayt' lies in the position of the members of the Prophet's family themselves on the doctrine of infallibility, as they were vehemently rejecting it. And they used to declare before the public that they are common and ordinary people, who can do wrong as they can to do right. They demanded of people to criticize them and guide them, and take the stand of opposition, when they commit any error or command evil- Allah forbids.

This is the position of the Commander of the Faithful Ali bin Abi Talib when he stood in the mosque of Kufah, and addressed the crowd in these words: "It is surely the right

of anyone who witnesses greatness of Allah in his heart, and exalts his position in his mind, to belittle and look down all other things and beings. The best of those who are as such, is the one on whom Allah's bounties have been magnificent, as well as His benevolence. For the favors of Allah have never been bountiful on a person, except the right of Allah on him becomes great. One of the most despising condition of leaders in the sight of good people, is when it is thought of them as lovers of pride, and that their affairs are based on haughtiness. I loathe that it might come to your mind that I love eulogy and the airing of praise. I am not like that. Even if I had love it, I would have left it in submission to Allah, the Exalted, rather than enjoying what is most deserving to Allah, of greatness and exaltation. People may see praise as sweet after trial, but praise me in light terms, for I have given myself claiming rights I have not yet given to (its owners) and for duties that I have to perform. Do not talk to me on what the oppressors discuss, and you don't need to be more careful regarding me, just as need the harbinger dives. Do not interact with me hypocritically, and do not think that I will be lethargic for a right that is said to be mine, as I do not arrogate to myself something that is not a right for me, for anyone who took the truth as a heavy burden, or justice that has been placed before him, he will find it very difficult to act upon that. You should never stop saying the truth and counseling on justice, because I am not above committing mistakes, and I do not feel secured from that in my acts, except if Allah suffice me in what He has power on which I do not have power on. You and I are slaves owned by the Lord beside whom there is no Lord. He has power regarding ourselves on what we have no power. He is the one who brought us to what we are now to what will be good for us. He substituted misguidance, with guidance and endowed us with insight after blindness." (3)

In another sermon the commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali mentioned the Kharijite, Al-Kharit bin Najiyah and his earlier attempts to instigate the Imam to kill and arrest a number of the leading opposition figures, and the statement of the Imam to him, and to

the general populace, that their duty is to stand by his side, and prevent, him, even he wanted to do that himself, and his saying to him "Fear Allah!"

Imam Ali would not have said that to him, if there were any tradition on infallibility among the Imams and Shiites and (other) Muslims. That is because, the glory of infallibility makes it necessary for the Imam to be above all kind of criticisms, and that he will be beyond any kind of opposition, or any attempt by anyone to advise and counsel him. Imam Ali has never done that, he depicted best example of humility and equality... He would not have demand of his companions to perform their political role in checking and correcting the Imam (if infallibility was the norm).

He (Ali) said in his du'ah (supplication): " O Allah forgive me what you know of me, if I go back to it again, forgive me again. O Allah! Forgive me what I kept in my mind, but You did not accomplish for me! O Allah! Forgive me what I said with my tongue in devotion to You, but my heart was inconsistent with it! O Allah forgive me the glimpses of the eyes, errors in speech, the desire of the heart and slippery of the tongue." (4)

In another place Imam Ali mentioned the qualities of the ruler and the basic requirements that must be available in him, without mentioning infallibility as one of them. He says: "... It is not befitting for the leader of people in their privacy, blood, booty, and Imam of Muslims to be: a miser so that he will find his lust in their wealth; nor an ignorant person, lest he lead them astray with his ignorance. Nor discourteous, lest he turns into different groups through his discourteousness; nor an unjust person towards people that accepts some and rejects others, nor one to takes bribes in judgment, that he deny people their rights; nor the one who abandons the tradition (sunnah), lest the Ummah be destroyed." (5)

He also says in another sermon: " O you people, surely the most deserving and suitable person for this matter is the most powerful of them in it, and the most knowledgeable of Allah's instructions regarding it." (6)

Saduq narrates in his Amali the story of Fatimah al-Zahra (peace be upon her), which is in conflict with the theory of infallibility, professed by the theologians. He reported that: Once Imam Ali bin Abi Talib spent the wealth from a field (farm) that he sold, to the extent that he did not leave even a penny. Fatimah protested and held onto his clothes. Jibril descended and informed the Prophet (peace be upon him), who then went to her and said: "It is not permissible for you to held onto his clothes, or to beat his hands." She said: "I seek the forgiveness of Allah and I will not repeat it again." (7)

As Sharif al-Rida also mentioned in 'Khasa'is al-A'imah', that Imam Hussain once borrowed a velvet from the public treasury that infuriated Imam Ali who said to him: "O father of Muhammad (beware of) the fire!... O father of Muhammad (beware of) the fire.... Till he went out with it." (8)

Likewise Imam Hussain (peace be upon him) did not point to the subject of infallibility in his letter to the people of Kufah, sent through his envoy Muslim bin Aqeel, he only allude to the necessity of the existence of certain qualities in the ruler, like Taqwa (fear of Allah), and sticking to the dictates of the Quran and religion. He said: "By (the One who holds) my lifespan...The Imam is none other than the one who acts upon the teachings of the Book, who confines himself to the will of Allah who is just and follows the religion of Allah." (9)

Imam Baqir reports a Hadith from the Messenger of Allah on the qualities of the ruler, but he did not include infallibility. He said: "The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: " The leadership of my Ummah will be right only for the man who possesses three qualities, namely, God fearing that deter him from disobeying Allah, and

forbearance, by which he controls his anger and good leadership of those he leads, till he becomes to them like a merciful father.” In another narration- “Till he becomes for the subjects like a merciful father.” This indicates that the Imamate can be among the common people with the above qualities. (10)

Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) has said: “ By Allah we are no other than servants... we cannot inflict harm or benefit (anyone). If we find mercy; it is due to Him, and if we are punished, it is due to our sins. By Allah, we have no excuse before Allah, nor do we claim any innocence before him. Definitely we are going to die, and will be put in the graves, and will be resurrected and questioned. I testify before you that I am a man born by the Messenger of Allah without any claim of innocence from Allah. If I obey Him He will shower mercy on me, and if I disobey Him, He will punish me severely.” (11)

There are two other narrations mentioned by Saduq in his book, ‘Uyun Akhbar al-Rida’ on the infallibility of the Prophets He said: “ Imam Rida discussed them (the two narrations) with Ali bin Muhammad bin al-Jahm, the servant of Mamun and he interpreted the clear Quranic verses on the mistakes (sins) of the Prophets and clear them of those sins. The narrator did not mention any Hadith from Imam Rida in this regard on the infallibility of the Imams, which shows the lack of adoption of the members of the Prophets family of the doctrine of infallibility, and the non- existence or appearance of such Hadiths in those days, except with the Imamate and extreme Shiites, and that also was secretly. If the Hadith of infallibility had any ground in the sight of the members of Ahl al-Bayt, Imam Rida must discuss them. For he as is being said, used to discuss the Imamate openly and boldly, because he was not afraid of the Abbasid Caliph, Mamun, for whom he became the Crown prince... Then why did Imam Rida only mention the infallibility of the Prophets (peace be upon them), but did not talk on the infallibility of the Imams.” (12)

Despite the clear stance of the Ahl al-Bayt' on the claim of infallibility, and their stressing that they have ordinary human nature, and their seeking of Allah's forgiveness on what they may commit, the Imamate Shiism had tried to stick onto that, interpreting the authentic narrations that deny infallibility, saying that they came from the Imams in the time of public teaching, or they were issued by means of Taqiyyah (insinuation). They narrated side by side with these reports, a group of other narrations which claim infallibility in clear terms, and which made it a condition in the Imam or the Imams from Ahl al- Bayt. They were weak, ambiguous and unspecific narrations.

There was a Mursal Hadith (in which a companion is missing) from Imam Zayn Al-Abidin, where he says: " The Imam from among us must be infallible. Infallibility is not a bodily feature that can be seen and recognized by the common people, but it is holding fast to the rope of Allah. And the rope of Allah is the Quran. The Quran guides to the Imam." (13)

Even if we overlook the scrutinization of this tradition that has no chain of narration, which was just attributed to Imam Zayn al- Abidin, it is evident that it interprets infallibility with holding unto the rope of Allah, which is the Quran. He did not mention any kind of ring imposed by Allah around the Imam, which prevents him from committing sins, as the theologians say.

There is another tradition from Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) in which he interpretes the infallible (Ma'sum), to be the one who abstains, for Allah's sake, from all what He has prohibited. Allah the Most High has said. ".... And whoever holds firmly to Allah, then he is indeed guided to the Right Path.' This also points to the same meaning as given by Imam Sajjad. (14)

This being so Saduq has also reported in Ikmal al-Din from Salim bin Qays from the Commander of the Faithful (Ali) that he said: "Allah has indeed purified us and protected

us and has made us to be in the company of the Quran, and made the Quran to be with us, we will never separate from it, as it will never separate from us.”

He has also reported in ‘Uyun Akhbar al-Rida’, from Abdullah bin Abbas who said “ I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) saying: “ Myself and Ali and Hassan and Hussain and nine of the children of Hussain are purified and infallible. Al- Majlisi reported in ‘Bihar al- Anwar’ a number of traditions which he said are attributed to Salim bin Qays al- Hilali, but they are not found in his book. He mentioned as part of them, a tradition that says: “ Obedience is indeed for Allah, the Exalted and for His Messenger and for those in authority. Allah has commanded obedience of those in authority because they are infallible and purified, and they do not command what is vice.” (15)

These traditions have no intellectual value, because they neither have chains of narrations, nor are they authentic.

There is another long narration found only with Saduq, from Imam Rida, speaking openly and in front of the Abbasid Caliph, Mamun, of the infallibility of Ahl al-Bayt, their virtues and characteristic features. (16)

But that report has a weak chain of transmission, that was because Saduq reported it from Ali bin Hussain bin Shadhiwaih Al- Mu’addab (an abandoned reporter) and Jafar bin Muhammad bin Masrur (also abandoned), and Al- Rayyan bin al-Salt (a weak reporter), who was one of the supporters of Fadl bin Sahl, without attributing his statement to anyone, nor claiming to have attended and heard the tradition himself. That was why no one reported it before Saduq, who lived in the middle of the fourth century of Hijrah. In addition to that it included a statement on the interpolation of the Quran, where it added ‘ Wa rahtuka, al- Mukhlisin’ to “And admonish your close relations, claiming that it was deleted from the Quran. This is what the extremist sects used to say and attribute to the Imams. The Imams have always disowned such

statements and denied them. The narration depends also a hermeneutical approach and arbitrary interpretations at some other times. Even though the narration tries to establish infallibility and purity of the members of the Prophet's family (Ahl al-Bayt), and the impossibility of their apostasy and ever reverting to misguidance, it did not give time to explain who are the 'Ahl al-Bayt; after confining them to the children of the Prophet and Imam Ali bin Abi Talib, without any strong and clear evidence.... Despite the difference among them on this issue, the children of the different Imams were in constant conflict among themselves, and each one of them claims that he is the Imam and the most deserving after his father. He will accuse others of lying and hypocrisy, and straying away from the truth. The narration also uncover the attempts of philosophers to interpret the Quran with what is in line with their new theory on the infallibility of the Imams.

THE STANCE OF IMAM SADIQ ON THE IMAMATE

Part of what confirmed the negative stance of Imam Sadiq on the Imamate theologians, and their secret doctrine which they developed independently and away from Ahl al-Bayt, were the many Hadiths of the Imam. The Imamate heritage is replete with them, through they interpret in the name of Taqiyyah (insinuation). Once a delegation of Shiites from Kufah, came to him and asked him: "O father of Abdullah, some people came to us claiming that among you- Ahl al-Bayt' there is the Imam whose obedience is obligatory?" He said to them: "No, I do not know that in the members of our family." They said: "O father of Abdullah, they are people of hard work, seclusion and piety, and they claim that you are the one." He then said: they know better what they have said, I did not command them to do so." (17)

Al- Kashi transmits from Hisham bin Salim Al- Jawaliqi that he talked to a man in Madinah, from Bani Makhzoum on the Imamate, the man, said to him: "Who is the Imam today?" He said to him. "Jafar bin Muhammad." The man was astonished and said: "By Allah I will tell him that." That aggrieved Hisham seriously fearing that Imam Jafar Sadiq will blame or disown him. (18)

Mufid stated in 'Al- Irshad' that: Imam Sadiq said to Hisham bin Salim al- Tawaliqi: "You want to narrate traditions but you don't know (it)." He also said to Qays al-Masir: "You speak what is farthest away from the truth and from the statements of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), you are from it. You mix truth with falsehood, little truth is enough (and better)." (19)

Al- Kashi says: Imam Sadiq prevented Mumin al-Taq from speaking, and he said to him after a debate between him and a man from 'Al-Sharah': "You did corner him, by Allah, you did not say even a word of the truth." He said: "How was that? He replied: "Because you were speaking on Qiyas (analogical deduction) and Qiyas is not part of my religion." (20)

Imam Sadiq did send to him Mufaddal bin Umar to stop him from speaking. When he came close to his house he said to him: "Abu Abdullah is telling you not to speak." He replied: "I fear that I may not be able to persevere." (21)

Imam Sadiq also asked Fudail bin Uthman about him (Mumin al-Taq): What happen to the owner of Taq (arch), it has come to me that he is controversial and that he speaks on 'Taym Badr.' " He replied, "Yes, he is controversial." The Imam then said: "Definitely if one of his smart opponents wants to overcome him, he can do it. He will say! Tell me this your doctrine, from the sayings of your Imam." If he will say, "Yes, he will lie against us. And if he says, no, he will say to him: "How do you talk on things that are not being said by your Imam?" Then Imam Sadiq said: You say things if I affirm and accept them, I

stand in error, and if I disown them, you separate from me... " Fudail bin Uthman then said: " Should I convey your message to him?" He replied: "By Allah they have gone into a matter, nothing will prevent them from abandoning it, except zealotry." Fudail then said, " I informed Abu Ja'far Al- Ahwal on that, and he said: " He has surely spoken the truth, may my father and mother be ransom for him, nothing prevent us from abandoning that, except zealotry." (22)

Al- Kashi also says: Imam Sadiq refused to receive Abu Basir and he said to him: " People of Kalam (theology) will perish and the Muslims will be saved." The Muslims are the chosen." He also said: "I used to narrate Hadith to a person, and stop him from disputation and argumentation in the religion of Allah, and I prevent him from using 'Qiyas' (analogy), then when he leaves me he will distort my statements in a manner not said by me. I have commanded some people to explain the doctrine and have prevented others. Anyone who distorts my message, he does it against himself, he falls into disobedience of Allah and His Messenger." (23)

THE CRISIS OF AL- BADA' (CHANGE OF WILL)

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On the other side, the nascent doctrine of Imamate suffered a serious setback with the death of Ismail bin Ja'far Sadiq. The Imamate Shiites in Kufah have gathered around him, and claimed that they transmitted (a tradition) from his father, that Ismail is his Khalifah (successor) after him. When he died in the lifetime of his father, it became clear that his appointment was not from Allah, otherwise he will not die before his father, or that the Imam used to appoint whom he knows (from Allah) that he will live after him.

Due to this, Sulaiman bin Jarir and a group of Shiites abandoned the doctrine of Imamate after they have believed in it for a long time. They reverted to considering Imam Sadiq as an ordinary scholarly figure, or considered the Imamate as a common human affair, with no any link to Allah. (24)

But a faction of the Imamate Shiites influenced by the Khattabiyyah esoteric movement, refused believing Imam Sadiq, and admitting the evident truth, but insisted on denying the death of Ismail, claiming that it was a drama staged by the Imam, and that what really happened was that he was smuggled out of Madinah, to protect him from dangers surrounding him, "because it is not possible for the Imam to appoint another person, who will die in his lifetime." This was despite the presentation of Imam Sadiq of the dead body of his son Ismail several times and his demanding those attending the funeral to look at his face to confirm his death. The Khattabiyyah maintained the Imams in the line of the children of Ismail, forming the Ismailite sect, which established the Fatimid Kingdom. (25)

As for those who admitted the death of Ismail, they concealed this problem that establishes the non-existence of a text from Allah, by resorting to believing in 'bada' or the belief that Allah changed His will regarding Ismail after Imam Sadiq (or that the Imamate of Ismail was not achieved due to death), who according to their statement has pointed to him and made him the Imam after him.

Yet another section of the Imamate Shiites found it difficult to accept the doctrine of 'bada' and say that it was impossible for Allah to change His will. They interpreted 'bada' as manifesting from Allah, or they denied that Imam Sadiq did indicate that his son Ismail or any other person would be the Imam after him. They say that he refused to appoint anyone in person. And that he linked the issue of recognizing the Imam after his

death, to a number of signs like being elderly, the claim of Imamate, a will, and taking the seat of the father.

Some reports transmitted by Saffar and Saduq do indicate that Muhammad bin Muslim, Yaqub bin Shu'aib and Abd al-A'ala were not aware of the Imam after Sadiq, and that he refused to reply to their question in specifying the name of the Imam to succeed him. He however, sought from them to go to Madinah, after his death, so as to inquire there about the new Imam. (26)

As a result of this ambiguity that surrounds the identity of the new Imam, the followers of Imam Sadiq, among the Imamate Shiites became divided into several sects. A group of them said that Imam Sadiq did not die, and that he was the awaited Mahdi. These are the Nawussites. A group of them believe in the Imamate of Isma'il, or his son Muhammad, and transferred the Imamate to his progeny—These are the Ismailites. (27)

The remaining followers acted on the instructions of Imam Sadiq, which called on them to move after his death. They went to Madinah where they found his elder son, Abdullah al-Aftah, occupying the seat of his father. He claimed possession of the will from his father, and being the Imam after him. The scholars and elders among the Shiites agreed on his Imamate, excluding those who claimed the Imamate of Ismail. Some of the Imamate Shiites reported from Imam Sadiq that he requested from his son, Musa to submit to his brother Abdullah, and not to dispute him in the matter. (28)

In this period, Zurarah bin A'yun, being one of the leading companions of both Imams Baqir and Sadiq died, without knowing the identity of the new Imam. He did send his son, Ubaidullah from Kufah to Madinah, to inquire about the new Imam, but was overtaken by death. At the time of his death, he placed the Quran on his chest and said: " O Allah I testify to follow anyone whose Imamate was established by this Book." (29)

All of Saffar, Kulayni, Mufid and Kashi confirmed that the pillars of the Imamate doctrine like Hisham bin Salim al-Jawaliqi and Muhammad bin Nu'man al-Ahwal initially went to Abdullah al-Aftah "upon whom people have agreed, that the affairs have returned to him after his father." That was due to what the people narrated from Abu Abdullah (Sadiq): "The affair will be in the eldest, so long as he has no defect" and the insistence of Ammar al-Sabati (one of the companions of the two Imams Baqir and Sadiq) on his Imamate till his death. (30)

In this way, Abdullah al-Aftah occupied the position of Imamate through the will and being the eldest, and occupation the seat of his father. He almost enjoyed the consensus of the Shiites on his Imamate, without the existence of any clear text on him from his father Imam Sadiq. (31)

Hisham bin Salim al-Jawaliqi said that he once went to Abdullah al-Aftah together with a group of Shiites, who asked him questions on issues of fiqh, but he did not answer them correctly, and that made them doubt his Imamate and they left him "confused and strayed ... so we sat in a corner of Kufah weeping and perplexed not knowing where to turn or go. We said: To the Murji'ites? To the Zaydites? To the Mutazilites? To the Kharijites? We were in that condition when I saw an old man whom I did not know, making a gesture with his hand. He said to me: "Enter may Allah have mercy on you. So I entered, there I found Abu al-Hassan Musa. He first said to me. "Not to the Murjiites, nor to the Qadarites, nor to the Zaydites, nor to the Mutazilites, nor to the Kharijites.... But to me to me! I said to him: "May I be your ransom has your father gone?" He replied: "If Allah wishes to guide you, He will guide you." I said: May I be your ransom, are you the one? He said: "No, I am not saying that." I then said to myself: I did not ask correctly. I then said: "Is there any Imam above you." He said: "No" Then something of his respect and awe only Allah knows, entered me. Then I said: "Shall I will ask you as I used to ask your father?" He said: "Ask.... And you will be informed. And do not spread

(this fact), and if you will do it , you will be slaughtered.” He said: “Then I asked him and found him, as a sea (of knowledge) that cannot be exhausted. I said: May I be your ransom...the supporters (Shiites) of your father have gone astray. Put this to them and call them to yourself? You have imposed on me secrecy and concealment.” He said: “Anyone you found to be guided, you can put it before him, and impose secrecy on him, if he will spread it, he will be slaughtered”—and he demonstrated by putting his hand on his throat. He said: Then I went out from his place and met Abu Ja’far al-Ahwal, and he said to me: “ What happened to you? “ I said: Guidance’ and I explained to him the story. We then met Fudail and Abu Basir, they went to him, listen to his statements, asked him and then agreed to follow him.”(32)

Hisham says in this narration: People have agreed—at least initially—on the Imamate of Abdullah al-Aftah, and the leaders of the Imamate Shiites did not know of any text on Kadhim, who refused to claim Imamate for himself. The establishment of his Imamate, according to Hisham, was due to his vast knowledge, and the unprepared ness of Imam Kadhim to declare his Imamate before the public.

Whether it is true that Hisham and his companions have rescinded their position as regards the Imamate of Abdullah al-Aftah in his life time or not, Al-Aftah died after about 70 days of the death of his father, without leaving behind an issue, in whose line the Imamate may continue. This has created a new crisis in the ranks of the Imamate Shiites, who believed that the Imamate is from Allah, and that it must continue in the progenies, and the progenies of progenies till the day of Resurrection. They became divided, forming three sects. One of them-the Musawites rescinded the doctrine of Imamate and deleted his name from the list of Imams. Some of those who lived after him (Abdullah) accused him of disobedience (fisq), ignorance, and deviation, and that for the purpose of explaining the illegality of his Imamate from the beginning. (33)

Some of them shifted to the idea of the Imamate of his brother, Musa after him like Abdullah bin Bukair and Ammar bin Musa al-Sabati. These people were known as the Fathites (Al-Fathiyyah), being some of the great companions of Imam Sadiq and other previous Imams. (34)

Fathites transcended the issue of vertical heredity (as regards the Imamate), and believed that it is allowed that two brothers can be Imams, if the earlier one has no issue. The third group insisted however, on the claim of the existence of a son for Abdullah al-Aftah, in secret, and that he has hidden him as a form of Taqiyyah: They said his name was Muhammad bin Abdullah: and that he is the Awaited Mahdi, who is in occultation in Yemen.

This crisis has uncovered the fragility and ambiguity of the doctrine of a text on Imamate, as well the difficulty of the Imamate Shiites in specifying and recognizing the Imam (mentioned through text from Allah), and their consensus on him, and the impossibility of believing in an Imam who has not fulfilled the requirements of Imamate, and then withdrawing from that position later on.

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THE IMAMATE OF MUSA KADHIM

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Imam Musa Kadhim became the supreme leader of the Shiites after the death of his brother Abdullah, due to his knowledge, piety, devotion and good character. These great qualities were enough to raise its owner to the rank of Imamate (leadership) in the Muslim society. He was not in need of these qualities, or of establishing his infallibility, or a text on him, as the Imamate Shiites, who could not establish anything other than this,

were saying: Sheikh Saduq while presenting evidences on the Imamate of Kadhimi, said:

“ If the Imam is manifest, and his followers differed concerning him, his knowledge appears, and his virtues in himself which are clear to both the common and closest people, become manifest. These are the signs of Imamate. When we found them in Musa and in no other person, we knew that he is the Imam after his father not his brother”. (35)

But despite that ambiguity that surrounds the issue of succession after Imam Sadiq, and the death of Zurarah without knowing the new Imam, and the acceptance of the pivots of the Imamate theory of the Imamate of Abdullah al-Aftah, the Imamate Shiites, especially Mufaddal bin Umar Abu Basir and Yaqub al-Siraj, have tried to bring texts that establish the will of Imam Sadiq to his son Kadhimi. Kulayni has mentioned in ‘al-Kafi,’ so also Saffar in ‘Basa’ir al-Darajat’ and Saduq in ‘Uyun Akhbar al-Rida’, as well as Mufid in ‘Al-Irshad’—about (16) sixteen texts, ranging from a vague pointer to a clear confirmation in this regard. (36)

It is only that, those texts did not prove to be decisive in the tussle for the Imamate, or rather they did not exist in the beginning. Saduq has admitted that Imam Kadhimi isolated himself from politics, and was keeping secret his affairs. The Shiites were not taking disputed to him. A strange tradition was reported from him, where he instructed the Shiites to obey the rulers in any case. If the rulers were just, they should pray to Allah to maintain their rule. If they were unjust, they should pray to Allah to guide and make them better.” (37)

Hence the general masses of the Shiites at the time of Imam Kadhimi have turned to Isa bin Zayd bin Ali (123-168 A.H), and paid him allegiance secretly as the Imam in the year 156 A.H. while he was in Iraq. People from Ahwaz, Wasit, Makkah, Madinah and Tihamah came to pay him allegiance (bay’ah). He appointed people to call to him and

they reached Egypt and Syria. He agreed together with his followers to declare a rebellion after the death of Mansur al-Dawaniqi. He died from poison in the suburbs of Kufah on the side of Basrah in the year 168 A.H. (38)

The Shiites also responded to the call of Hussain 'Shahid fakh' and they came paying allegiance to him on the basis of the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him), for the accepted (Rida) from the family of Muhammad (peace be upon him). Hussain declared: " I take your oath of allegiance on the basis of the book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah, and on the basis of obeying Allah and He would not be disobeyed, and I call you to accept Rida from the family of Muhammad (peace be upon him). That we will implement in you the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His prophet, we will also maintain justice among the subjects, as well as fair distribution (of wealth), on the basis that you obey us, and fight our enemy. If we fulfill these for you, you fulfill what is on you for us, but if we did not fulfill our promises there is no any allegiance for us on you." (39)

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THE EVIDENCE OF MIRACLES

When Imam Musa Kadhim was not calling the people to accept him (as the Imam), and there was no any special text on him from Allah or from his father, the Imamate Shiites resorted to the weapon of miracles and the knowledge of the Unseen, in order to establish the existence of a special divine link between Imam Kadhim and Allah. And that he alone was the only legal heir of Imam Sadiq.

Abu Basir says that he went once to Imam Kadhim and asked him: "May I be your ransom, how can we know the Imam? He answered: " By some qualities: The first of

them is something (documents) he presents from his father and his pointing to it as evidence, and that when he will be asked questions, he will tell of what will happen in future and he will talk to people in different languages. "Then he said: O father of Muhammad, for the Imam the speech of no one not even the speech of birds, nor the speech of any being with soul can be hidden from him. Any one who has no such qualities, he is not the Imam." (40)

Kulayni stated that: "Imam Kadhimi knew when a person will die, and he used to tell his companions about that, as he used to tell them of their destinies in the future." (41)

In this way, the scholars of Hadith narrate the process of establishing the Imamate of Kadhimi, as a great collection of miracles, like his coming out of detention in Baghdad, and his breaking the shackles and his passing through the walls, and his going to Madinah, and his coming back in the same night. So also putting his stamp on a small stone; and his speaking foreign languages without learning them; and that fire does not burn him and his raising a dead cow to life. (42).

Only that this 'evidence' cannot be establishing without serious difficulties, especially that Imam Kadhimi himself denies it, as he denies possessing the knowledge of the Unseen (al-Ghayb).

WAQIFIYYAH

As the doctrine of Imamate was gasping for breath after the crisis of the will to Isma'il and 'bada' (change of will), and the crisis of Abdullah al-Aftah and his death without an issue, then the crisis of establishing the Imamate of Kadhimi... the doctrine faced another crisis of the death of Imam Musa Kadhimi in the prison of Harun Rashid in

Baghdad in the year 183 A.H. in a mysterious circumstances. The masses of the Shiites (Musawites) claim that he fled from the prison and went to occultation, and denied his death.

The death of Kadhim was a real mystery, to the extent that most of his children, students and companions were confused, so also some authorities and reliable reporters like Ali bin Abi Hamzah, Ali bin Al-Khattab, Ghalib bin Uthman, Muhammad bin Ishaq bin Ammar al-Taghlibi al-Sirafi, Ishaq bin Jarir, Musa bin Bakr, Wuhaib bin Hafs al-Jariri, Yahya bin Hussain bin Zayd bin Ali bin Hussain, Yahya bin al-Qasim al-Hadha Abu Basir, Abdul Rahman bin Hajjaj, Rifa'ah bin Musa, Yunus bin Ya'qub, Jamil bin Daraj, Hammad bin Isa, Ahmed bin Muhammad bin Abi Nasr, and the family of Mahran and other reliable companions. (43)

The main reason for the doctrine of halting the Imamate with Imam Kadhim believed by the Musawites, and their non-acceptance of the Imamate of his son Rida, was the various narrations on the Mahdism of Kadhim and the inevitability of his coming back to life after his death. (44)

Hassan bin Qiyama al-Sirafi has performed the Hajj in the year 193 A.H. i.e. after 10 years of the death of Kadhim, and he asked Rida about his father." He replied, "He has gone like his forefathers." He then said: "But what can I do with the tradition, which Yaqub bin Shuaib has narrated to me from Abu Basir, that the father of Abdullah said: "If anyone comes to you telling you that this my son has died and was put in the shroud and then in the grave, and that they dusted their hands from the ground of his grave, you should not believe him." He (Rida) said: Abu Basir is telling lie, he did not tell him so, he only said: "If it comes to you from the owner of this affair." (45)

Kulayni has also reported from Ali bin Asbat who said: I said to Rida: A man came to your brother Ibrahim and told him that your father is alive and that you know that as

himself.” He replied: “Glory be to Allah! The Messenger of Allah died and Musa will not die?” He then stressed that saying “ By Allah he has gone as the Messenger of Allah has gone.” (46)

A famous tradition among the Musawite Imamate Shiites “that only the Imam will wash the dead body of the Imam,” has increased their doubt, as regards Imam Rida, when they say: “How then did Ali Rida washed in his father who died in Baghdad while he was in Madinah?” (47)

Many of them continued to question how Imam Rida came to know of the death of his father and when he knew it. And when did he know that he has become the Imam succeeding his father? Were there any interval between the death of Kadhim and the knowledge of his son Rida, and his subsequent becoming the Imam, after him? (48)

Part of what raise doubts in the minds of the Waqifite Shiites as regards the Imamate of Rida, was his not leaving behind an offspring till late in his life; and the doubt of the household of Imam Rida in attributing his son Muhammad Jawwad, who was attributed to other than him, due to the blackness of his complexion, and their eventual resort to experts for the final determination of the issue. (49)

In addition to the ambiguity of the text on Imam Ali bin Musa Rida, who was not recognized as the Imam by the majority of the Shiites, and even by the children of Imam Kadhim, and even by the revered wife of the Imam, Umm Ahmad? (50)

A report is saying that the Shiites in Madinah, upon their learning of the death of Imam Kadhim, gathered at the door of Umm Ahmad, and paid their allegiance to Ahmad son of Imam Kadhim as the Imam, and he took oath of allegiance from them. (51)

The Imamate Shiites did hold on to the will of Imam Kadhim for his son, in establishing the Imamate of Rida. Muhammad bin Zayd bin Ali considered the will as taking the place of confirming his Imamate, even though the will was ambiguous, and

not explicitly on the Imamate. More so that Kadhim included his other children with his son Ali in it. The will was on wealth, awqafs (evdowments), charity, small children and women, due to that it was made confidential and Imam Kadhim refused revealing it to anyone a member of his family ERA of. (52)

THE POSITION OF SHIITES ON THE IMAMATE OF RIDA

As a result of the ambiguity associated with the text on Imam Rida, and the lack of spread of the doctrine of divine Imamate among the Shiites of that time, a number of other Alawite leaders appeared on the scene as leaders of the opposition Shiite movements, like Ali bin Ubaidullah bin Hassan bin Ali bin Hussain bin Ali bin Abi Talib, Abdullah bin Musa, Muhammad bin Ibrahim (Ibn Tabataba) bin Hassan bin Hassan bin Ali bin Abi Talib.

Isfahani stated that: A man among the Shiites from the Peninsula (Jazirah) called, Nasr bin Shabib came to Hijaz in the beginning of the era of Ma'mun in the year 198 A.H. He went to Madinah and asked of the remaining members of the Prophet's family (Ah al-Bayt) and any well-known figure among them. The three names of those Alawites were mentioned to him. He met one of them, namely Muhammad bin Ibrahim and he reminded him of what happened to family of Ali, of persecution and incarceration, due to the snatching of the right of the Alawites to the Caliphate by the Abbasids. Then he said to him: "How long will you be trampled upon, and your supporters allow that, and you keep silent on your right? He called him to the peninsula to declare a rebellion against the weak Abbasid rule. But Nasr was not able to fulfill his pledge due to conflict among his clan and the lack of means. So he apologized to Muhammad who returned

disappointed- to Hijaz. On his way back he met Abu al-Suraya (Al-Sirri bin mansur), who has revolted against the Abbasid authorities. He offered to Muhammad bin Ibrahim to give him what Nasr was unable to provide. He pledged to him to help and support him. And he demanded from him not to go back to Madinah, but to turn instead to Kufah. (53)

In this way, Ibn Tabataba with the support of Abu Suraya declared a revolt in Kufah in the year 199 A.H. He called them in his sermon, to give their oath of allegiance to Rida of the members of the family of Muhammad (peace be upon him), and commanding what is right and forbidding what is wrong. The people of Kufah paid him their allegiance based on that. (54)

Not long after that Ibn Tabataba fell ill and died, he offered his will to Abu Suraya (telling him): To fear Allah and to stand as a custodian of religion, and to support the ‘Ahl al-Bayt’, and appointing from the people one who will take his position from among the Alawites. If they differ, then the affair should go to Ali bin Ubaidullah. (55)

Ibn Tabataba did not specify any particular person from the family of Abu Talib, neither in his sermon at the time of pledging allegiance nor in the will. He only called to ‘Rida (the accepted) from the family of Muhammad (peace be upon him). The Shiites in Kufah were not having any particular picture of a man in person from the ‘Ahl al-Bayt’, nor do they believe in any specific doctrine like that of divine Imamate. nor any inclination in them towards the Imamate of Ali bin Musa Rida, whom they revere as one of the leaders of the Alawite household. On the second day of the death of Ibn Tabataba, Abu Suraya gathered the Shiites to condole them on the death of Muhammad bin Ibrahim. He told them of his will, and that he has given it to Ali bin Ubaidullah. Then he said: If you agree and accept him, he is the accepted (Rida), if not, then you choose for yourself. “But Ali abdicated that pledge, and recommended an Alawite beardless

youth, namely Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Zayd, so that the Shiites give their bay'ah (pledge) to him. Abu Suraya agreed on that, and the Shiites pledged allegiance to him. Muhammad bin Muhammad appointed as his representatives: Ibrahim bin Musa bin Ja'far in Yemen; Zahid bin Musa bin Jafar in Ahwaz; Abbas bin Muhammad bin Isa bin Muhammad bin Ali bin Abdullah bin Jafar bin Abi Talib in Basrah; Muhammad bin Sulaiman bin Dawud bin Hassan bin Hassan bin Ali in Madina; Hussain bin Ibrahim bin Hassan bin Ali in Wasit and finally, Hussain bin Hassan in Makkah. (56)

The influence of the young Alawite leader Muhammad bin Muhammad and was able within a short time, to control many of the cities of Iraq, Hijaz and Yemen. Letters were coming from all sides, so also news of conquests of many areas. The people of Syria and the peninsula wrote to him, saying that they were waiting for a Messenger so as to obey and follow suit. (57)

But with the inception of the new year 200 A.H. in its first month, this Shiite movement collapsed. The army of Abbasid caliph Ma'mun regained control on the different cities, and was chasing the forces of the movement. They also killed the leader of that movement Abu Suraya and arrested Muhammad bin Muhammad, after just a period of 10 months since its inception. (58)

No sooner had the revolt of Abu Suraya been subdued and crushed, that Muhammad al-Dibaj son of Imam Sadiq declared himself as the Commander of the faithful (Amir al-Muminin) in Hijaz. He took the pledge of allegiance after the Friday prayer, on the 6th of Rabi al-Akhir 200 A.H, and hoped to be the Mahdi, the owner of the affair. But he very soon failed and abdicated the Caliphate, paying his allegiance to Ma'mun. Despite that the Abbasid sources escorted him under tight security to Khurasan. (59)

What is more important to us in the case of Muhammad al-Dibaj was the stance of the Talibites and the Shiites in general on his movement, and the flocking of the people to pledge their allegiance to him. This indicates the amount of support he enjoyed as compared to the his nephew Rida, as well as the ignorance of the general masses of Shiites as regards the divine Imamate based on infallibility and text, which was being advocated by a group of theologians in Kufah.

THE STANCE OF MA'MUN ON RIDA

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At the time the Abbasid Caliph offered the Caliphate to Imam Ali bin Musa Rida in the year 201 A.H, He did not offer it to him in his capacity as the eight Imam in the series of 12 Imams, but he did that based on his virtue and exalted position. Mamun has pledged to Allah during his power tussle with his brother Amin, to transfer the caliphate to the best of the members of the Abu Talib's family. He then announced: "Ali Rida is the best of the Alawites." (60)

Ma'mun had caused a serious twist in the political ideology of the Abbasids, which was built by the Abbasid Mahdi, and he confirmed on its basis the right of Abbas to the Caliphate, and based, in turn, on the right of their grandfather Abbas to inherit the Prophet (peace be upon him). He issued a political edict to that effect, contrary to what the Abbasid held of the old Shiite thought (Kisanite), before they overpowered and put an end to the Umayyad rule in the year 132 A.H that was due to their belief in the legality of the Imamate of Imam Ali bin Abi Talib. They depended as for their legality on the Abu Hashim Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah, who was reported to have

given his will to their grandfather on the Imamate, at the time of his untimely death in Al-Hamimah.

Mamun did revert the Abbasid political thought to its Alawite-Fatimid wing, and he declared that the fundamental right to rule is for the Alawites, based on the right of Imam Ali to succeed the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). That was why he called on Rida to take the Caliphate from him. But when Imam Rida refused that, he offered him the position of the crown prince, which he accepted. On the day of the bay'ah (pledge of allegiance) Imam Rida gave a sermon in which he said: "The commander of the Faithful (Amir al-Muminin) may Allah strengthen and guide him to what is right has recognized our right, which was not recognized by others. He maintained by that the relations that were severed, and brought peace to people who are scared. Nay, he quickens then after they have been devastated, and brought contentment to them after they have lost it, seeking by that the pleasure of the Lord of the worlds, seeking for reward from none other than Him. He gave me his pledge (of being the Crown Prince) if I live after him. Anyone who loosens and breaches what Allah has ordered to maintain, and severs the rope which Allah loves to remain uncut, has sold his harem and has made legal what Allah has made illegal. He has by that despised the Imam and sacrilege the inviolability of Islam. This was the way of the predecessors (Salaf). It is an opportunity that you should seize and a surprise that should not be lost. I do not know what will happen to you and me. Judgment rests with Allah alone. He decrees the truth; He is the best of Judges. (61)

Whatever the differences among Historians in analyzing the position of Ma'mun the pledge of Imam Rida to him and his acceptance of his being crown prince, point to a clear ideological stand on the legality of the Caliphate of Ma'mun, and the reality of the Imamate of Rida, away from the doctrine of divine Imamate, which was exclusive to the children of Ali and Hussain. The alliance formed between the two Hashimite households:

the Abbasids and the Alawites were the main feature of the second stage and the official doctrine of the Abbasid state for few decades. This took the shape of positive stance of the Abbasid Caliph towards the children of Rida, like Muhammad Jawwad, Ali Hadi and Hassan Askari by recognizing them as symbols of constitutional legality. They were revered and respected as was due.....

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THE REVOLUTION OF IBRAHIM BIN MUSA KADHIM IN YEMEN

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At the time Imam Rida was on his way towards Khurasan, in response to the invitation of the Abbasid Caliph Ma'mun, for a truce and reconciliation, which led to his accepting being the Crown Prince and his giving him his pledge of allegiance in Ramadan of the year 201 A.H , at that time, his brother, Ibrahim bin Musa who participated in the rebellion of Ibn Tabataba in Kufah, had gone to Yemen as governor. He refused to accept the crushing of the rebellion in the year 200 A.H. and insisted on controlling Yemen in his name. Ibrahim had ruled over it for sometime after which Caliph Ma'mun was forced to recognize him and to remove his governor, Muhammad bin Ali bin Isa bin Mahan. (62)

THE REVOLUTION OF ALI BIN MUHAMMAD BIN SADIQ AND ABDULLAH, THE BROTHER OF ABU SURAYA IN KUFAH

This revolution took place in Kufah, the base of Shiites, in the year 202 A.H i.e. after less than two years of the failure of the revolution of the father of Ali bin Muhammad and that of the brother of Abdullah. This new and combined rebellion took place, in a new circumstance, i.e the reconciliation between Ma'mun and one the greatest pillars of Alawite household: and it being against the Alawite governor: Abbas bin Musa, the brother of Imam Rida, who was calling them to give their pledge of allegiance to the Abbasid Caliph Ma'mun, and his Crown Prince Rida.

The rebellion was aimed at the Abbasid Caliph specifically, and against giving the oath of allegiance to him. As it was a Shiite revolution their stance towards Imam Rida was not negative. The people of Kufah expressed their position in what they said to Abbas bin Musa: " If you call us to Ma'mun then after him to your brother, we are not in need of your call, but if you call to your brother, or some people among the 'Ahl al-Bayt' or to yourself, we will accept and follow you." (63)

This position reveals to us the non-existence in the people of Kufah, of belief in the doctrine of divine Imamate, so also their lack of distinguishing between Imam Rida or his brother, Abbas or anyone from the 'Ahl al-Bayt', when it comes to who should lead them, and be their Imam.... This means that the word 'Ahl al-Bayt' in the sight of the people of Kufah at that time was comprehensive and inclusive of all the children of the Alawite household. It was not limited to particular persons, as it was in the days of the Umayyads: the entire Hashimite household including the children of Abbas, those who

were working under the slogan of to the accepted (Rida) of the family of Muhammad (peace be upon him).

THE QAT'IYYITES (AL-QAT'IYYAH)

In juxtaposition of these open-minded Shiites, as well as the Waqifiyyah (Waqifites), who put a halt to the Imamate, in the person of Kadh'im, there were naturally those who believe in the Imamate of Ali bin Musa Rida, and ended it with him. This later group was called the Qat'iyyah (Qatiyyites). They have reported a number of texts from Kadh'im, on his appointing his son Rida as his successor (Imam) after him.

The following Hadith may be one of the salient narrations on this: Yazid bin Salit says: "I met Abu Ibrahim (Kadh'im)- on our way to perform Umrah. On the way, and he said to me: "I have left my house and left my will with my son, so –and –so. I mentioned my other children with him in the apparent but have given him my will implicitly. I mentioned him exclusively. If the matter were to be decided by me, I would have given it to my son Qasim, for my love and sympathy towards him, but it is with Allah, He places it where He wills. The Prophet of Allah (peace be upon him) has come to me on his affair, and has showed him to me as well as those who will be with him. In the same way, no one among us gives the will to another person, until the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and my grandfather Ali confirm their affairs. Then he said to me: "The affair has left you to some one other than you". I said: "O Messenger of Allah, show him to me, who among them? The Messenger of Allah said: I have not seen anyone of the Imams more worried on losing this matter, than you. If the Imamate was based on love, Isma'il was dearer to your father than you, but it is from Allah, the Exalted...." And I saw

all my children, the dead and the living. The Commander of the Faithful said to me: "This is their leader" and he pointed to my son Ali-He is from me and I am from him, and Allah is with those who do good.

Abu Ibrahim then said: O Yazid it is a trust with you, and do not tell any one of it, except the intelligent, or a servant (of Allah) you knew to be truthful. If you were required to serve as a witness, you can testify, with it.." Abu Ibrahim also said: " I turned to the Messenger of Allah, and said: " You have gathered them for me, may my father and mother be sacrificed for you, who is he among them? " He said: " He is the one who sees through the light of Allah, the exalted, and who hears with His understanding, and who speaks with His injunctions." He then took the land of my son Ali and said: " Your staying with him will not be long so when you return from your journey, write your will and organize your affair. And finish what you wished, as you will soon leave them and be in company of others. If you wish, I will call Ali to wash and shroud you, that is purification for you, and nothing other than that will make it right and straight. That was the way that has passed away. Command him and he will recite nine takbir on you (funeral prayer), as his will is upright, so also your successor while you are still alive."

Then Abu Ibrahim said: "My soul will be taken this year, and the affairs will be with my son Ali. He should not talk till after four years of the death of Harun." (64)

This last narration is the most quoted of the narrations on the matter of the Imamate of Rida, in clear and explicit terms. It says: 'Imam Kadhimi was unaware of the Imam to succeed him, and he preferred Qasim, upto the time of the revelation (dream) and the designation of the subsequent Imam through the medium of dream. The apparent will was general, as it did not establish special evidence on the Imamate. This narration also claims the existence of another secret will. And that Imam Kadhimi gave

the will to his son Ali secretly, the thing that led the children of Imam Kadhim and his brothers to claim lack of knowledge and ignorance of it.

It is likely that Yazid bin Salit or another man had fabricated it later on, in order to support the Imamate of Imam Rida. That is because the reporter claims that Imam Kadhim has demanded from him to keep the matter in the secret and concealed, and not to reveal it, except to the intelligent and true servants (of Allah), and that the Imam did not announce that explicitly even to his children. This is what makes one doubt this (esoteric) narration.

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MIRACLES AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE UNSEEN

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In the absence of clear and unambiguous texts, which were also both general and direct on the Imamate of Rida, it became inevitable for the Imamate Shiites to seek the help of, or depend on the weapon of miracles and the claim that Imam Rida has the knowledge of the Unseen (al-Ghayb).

Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Amr bin Abi Nasr al-Bizanti al-Sukuni al-Kufi, considered as one of those supporting 'Ijma' (consensus), was initially a 'Waqifite'. He refused to accept in the Imamate of Rida, because –as he said– he responded on some fiqhi (juristic) issues contrary to what came from his fore-fathers and his relations (from Ahl al-Bayt). But later Al-Bizanti accepted his Imamate after his invitation by Ma'mun. He said he felt that Imam Rida has the knowledge of the Unseen, and the knowledge of what is in his soul. He took that as miraculous evidence on the Imamate of Rida. He became one of his closest companions, and of great position with the Imam. He narrated a book from him. (65).

Dawud bin Kathir al-Ruqi (considered) by Al-Kashi as one of the reliable reporters and who reported from Imam Sadiq that he said of him: That he was to him like the position of Miqdad to the Messenger of Allah, and that he was one of the companions of the Owner of affairs had doubted the Imamate of Rida, and stopped counting him as one of the Imams. That was due to what he reported from Kadhim, that he was the Qa'im. He reverted later to accepting the Imamate of Rida. (66)

Just as Abdullah bin Mughirah believed in ceasing Imamate with Kadhim (Waqifite), but later shifted to the acceptance of the Imamate of Rida, not based on a tradition he found subsequently, rather that was based on the evidence of the Unseen, a miracle and knowledge of al-Ghayb, he found in Imam Rida... He says: I was confronted, Waqifite and debated with him on that position, but when I went to Makkah, I felt something in my heart, so I took hold of Multazam (part of the Ka'bah) then said: "O Allah! You knew my request and wish, guide me to the best of religion. I felt in my mind, to go to Rida. I went to Madinah and stood by his door. I said to the servant: "Tell your master that a man from Iraq is waiting for him." He said: I then heard him calling me saying come in O Abdullah bin Mughirah... Come in O Abdullah bin Mughirah. I then entered. When he looked at me he said to me: "Allah has granted your du'a and has guided you to His religion." I said: I testified that you are Allah's evidence and the trusted one on His creation." (67)

There was another narration, which is more explicit, and which based the Imamate of Rida on the knowledge of the Unseen. It came from a different reporter who was also a 'Waqifite' for about 10 years, till the time of the journey of the Imam to Khurasan. The reporter was Al-Wassha, who claimed that he came to Khurasan, and Imam Rida sent his servant to him, to buy some clothes for him. The reporter could not remember where he placed them, but the Imam knew their place. He also told him of the issues he wanted to ask him about. (68)

Al- Wassa then decided on the basis of these miracles, to change his mind and to accept the Imamate of Rida, whereas for a period of more than 10 years, he did not accept it.

Tusi in 'Al-Ghaybah' reported several traditions on the knowledge of Imam Rida regarding the Unseen, as evidences for his Imamate. Among these were the following: His informing Ma'mun of the place of death of Rida as well as his own (Ma'mun's): his telling Ma'mun of a child to be born for him with extra limbs, similarly Kulayni reported many miraculous stories like: Imam Rida informed a man on the amount of his debt, as well as giving him wealth according to his needs. Saduq also reported a big number of evidences that confirm the Imamate of Rida. All of these were on his knowledge of the Unseen (al-Ghayb), and the knowledge of death and other calamities. He mentions in Uyun Akhbar al-Rida, 'the miracle of the death of Rida on the hands of Ma'mun's men and his coming back to life again. Saffar also mentions the Imam's knowledge of the speech of birds as evidence on the validity of his Imamate. In a report mentioned by Al Har al-Amili from Imam Rida: "The evidence of Imamate is in the acceptance of Du'a, the knowledge of the unseen, and what is in peoples hearts. (69)

But all these stories cannot be established, and they do contradict the glorious Quran, and the life history of the members of the Prophet's family.

The extremists fabricated these traditions, and hence, they do not constitute convincing evidence on the Imamate of Imam Rida.

On abandoning them and abandoning these narrations mentioned by the Imamate Shiites on the necessity of a text, we should observe what Imam Rida (peace be upon him) said while discussing the doctrine of Shura in explicit terms. He reported a Hadith from his pure fore fathers, from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) that he said: " Anyone who wants to divide the community, and to usurp the right of the

Ummah, and to make someone a leader not through consultation, kill him, for Allah has permitted that". (70)

This reveals Imam Rida's true political theory, which is in line with the general trend in the Ahl al-Bayt'. It emphasizes the right of the Ummah in consultation (Shura), and of choosing their leaders. It also calls for the killing of anyone who usurps its right and who controls it without its consent

THE CRISIS OF CHILDHOOD

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As the Imamate Shiites were attempting to establish the Imamate of Rida through texts and miracles, Imam Rida died in Khurasan, in the year 203 A.H., while his son Jawwad was only seven (7) years old. This led to another serious crisis in the ranks of the Imamate Shiites, and challenged the nascent theory of the Imamate. As it will never be reasonable, that Allah appoint for the leadership of the Muslims, a small child catered for, one who cannot use his personal wealth as he wills, who is not yet religiously responsible according to the Islamic law, one who did not even have the chance to learn anything from his father, who left him in Madinah, while he was only four (4) years old. (71)

This led to division in the ranks of Imamate Shiites into several sects:

- A- A- A group reverted to Waqf (stoppage) of the Imamate with Musa Kadhim, and abandoned its belief in the Imamate of Rida, and rejected as well, the Imamate of Jawwad. They said: As for anyone whose age is as we mentioned, who has not yet reached the age of puberty, and is not even near it, Allah says: " And try orphans (as regards their intelligence)

until they reach the age of marriage, if then you find sound judgement in them release their property to them..." If Allah the Most High, has made it compulsory not to give such his wealth, as he made that incumbent on all orphans, that invalidates him being the Imam, because the Imam is the leader of the creation in all religious or mundane issues. It is not right for him to control all the wealth of Allah the Exalted, including charities, Khums..... As he cannot be relied upon in the matters of law and its injunctions, and to be the leader of the jurists, judges, rulers, etc. and one who controls the wealth of many intelligent people in many sectors --- one who has no right on even a penny from his personal wealth, one not trusted in what he may choose for himself; one whose wealth is controlled by another due to his young age, and the smallness of his reason, due to the contradiction and impossibility of that." (72)

B- B- Another group went to the brother of Imam Rida—Ahmad bin Musa, who accepted the views of the Zaydites, and joined Abu al-Suraya in Kufah, and was loved and respected by his brother Rida. He was knowledgeable and pious as described by Mufid in al-Irshad: (73)

These people claimed that Rida gave his will to him and stated that he will be the Imam (after him. (74) This group has taken the same way as the Fathites who believed in the Imamate of Musa Kadhim after the death of Abdullah bin Ja'far without an issue. And so they did not stick to the law of vertical inheritance strictly. They considered Jawwad, who was a small child as if he did not exist.

Yet another group of the Shiites gathered around Imam Muhammad bin Qasim bin Umar bin Ali bin Hussain bin Ali bin Abi Talib, who was living in Kufah. He was well known for his devotion, ascetic piety, knowledge and fiqh. He led a revolt against caliph Mu'tasim in Talqan in the year 218 A.H. (75)

C- C- Another group yet accepted the Imamate of Jawwad, but it became very uncomfortable in responding to the problem of his age and his knowledge. Some of them said' " It is not possible that his knowledge was from his father, because his father left for Khurasan, while Abu Ja'far was only four years and a few months old. Anyone in that age cannot pursue the knowledge of difficult and delicate issues of religion. Rather, he was bestowed knowledge by Allah after reaching the age of puberty through various means. That expounds the various ways of achieving knowledge by the Imam, like inspiration, ideas put in the heart, whispering in the ear, true divine (vision) while asleep, and the angel talking to him, the various ways of raising the minaret, the pillars and the lamp, and exhibition of deeds. (76)

As the Imamate Shiites considered the Imamate similar to Prophethood, and that it comes from Allah, it was not strange for them to mention some Qur'anic verses like the one saying 'And we bestowed him wisdom while a child... They said: Just as Allah has given prophethood to Yahya, while a small child, and as He also gave it to Isa, while a little kid, in the same we may ask, why should it not be permissible that He gives the Imamate to Muhammad Jawwad while he was seven (7) years old? They narrated a statement from Jawwad on the doubts raised on his age: "Allah has sent revelation to Dawud to appoint as his successor Sulaiman, who was a small child then, rearing sheep." (77)

Others who also believe in the Imamate of Jawwad without accepting the above view, said: " Jawwad before reaching the age of puberty was the Imam, meaning that the affairs are in his hands alone till the time of his maturity. After maturity, he gains knowledge neither through inspiration, nor through indications or any other means mentioned by the earlier sects, because revelation has ceased after the Prophet (peace be upon him) according to the consensus of the Ummah." They rejected the idea of giving knowledge through inspiration and said (in that regard): " It is not reasonable that he will know that except through personal efforts or the seeking of knowledge, not through Divine intervention or endowment of knowledge. We rather believe that

he gained that knowledge at the time of maturity, from the books of his father and from what knowledge he inherited therein, and what he designed for him in them in terms of the fundamentals and non-fundamentals. A group of these people accepted the permissibility of Qiyas (analogical deductions) as well as Ijtihad' (juristic analogy) in the injunctions and precepts, but only for the Imam. That will be based on his fundamentals or principles, as he is infallible from mistakes and errors. He will not commit error or mistake in qiyas.'(78)

This opinion necessitates a review of the theory of Imamate, and a question that immediately arises is: Who then was the Imam at the time when Jawwad was small? Who was given the will (wasiyyah)?

Despite the fact that there is no clear text on the Imamate of Jawwad from Rida, or any will, and despite the lack of any claim to Imamate from Jawwad himself, the Imamate Shiites were compelled to believe in his Imamate, to save their doctrine from imminent collapse. They had to build their doctrine on narrations of miracles, (extraordinary) knowledge of the Unseen, like Jawwad's knowledge of the death of his father in Khurasan while he was in Madinah, at the same moment. So also going there in a twinkle of an eye to wash him and put his shroud on him, and his subsequent return to Madinah in the same night. The speech of the stick, that was in his hand, testifying on his Imamate, and his reply on 30,000 questions from a group of Shiites at one sitting. (79)

The same problem of tender age experienced on the Imamate of Jawwad was repeated in the case of his son, Ali Hadi as Jawwad died while he was a child, and he was 25 years old. His only two sons Ali and Musa were very small kids; the eldest of the two was not up to 7 years old.

As Hadi was very small when Jawwad died he left his wealth, garden and other expenditures in the hands of Abdullah bin al-Musawir, and ordered him to hand it over to Hadi when he is matured.

Ahmad bin Abi Khalid the servant of Abu Ja'far was made a witness to that. (80) This is what made some Shiites to ask: If Hadi was not able to manage his wealth, garden and expenditures due to his

tender age, according to the view of his father then who was the Imam at that time? How can a small child be the Imam? It was the same question raised by some at the time of the death of Rida earlier on, when Jawwad was a small child. The ambiguity as regards Ali and Musa increased the perplexity of the Shiites on who among the two is Imam?

Kulayni and Mufid narrate the ambiguity and perplexity of the Imamate Shiites on the Imamate after Jawwad and on the great Shiites' lack of knowledge of the identity of then new Imam. They met in the house of Muhammad bin Al-Faraj to discuss this issue. A man came to them later to inform them that Imam Jawwad had told him secretly that the Imamate would be with his son Ali. (81)

That perplexity and ambiguity on the issue of who will be the Imam, has led to division among the followers of Jawwad into two groups: One group believes in the Imamate of Hadi and the other believes in Musa Mubarka' being the Imam. (82)

Sheikh Mufid however, did not mention this division but neglected it. He rather claimed that the Shiite have all agreed on the Imamate of Hadi. He said that that consensus constitutes an evidence, as regards his Imamate, rather than citing texts in detail. (83)

However that does not really constitute enough evidence on confirming the Imamate of Hadi. This led the Imamate Shiites as usual to the attempt of confirming his Imamate by means of miracles, and claims of the knowledge of the Unseen (al-Ghayb). They went ahead claiming: his knowledge of the illness of one of his cousins miraculously; his knowledge of the murder of the Abbasid Caliph Wathiq and Mutawakkil's take over; the murder of Ibn al-Zayyat while he was in Madinah, and before six days of the first traveler from Iraq; the transportation (by the Imam) of one of his disciples from 'Surra man Raa' to Baghdad in a twinkle of an eye; his turning a shop of a poor man to beautiful and pleasing gardens, and in them all the blessings of beautiful damsels and youth like preserved pearls, and birds, bees and gushing rivers. (84)

THE PROBLEM OF 'AL-BADA' (CHANGE OF WILL)

REVISITED:

The doctrine of Imamate as believed by the members of the Prophet's household (Ahl al-Bayt) and the general Shiite populace is different from that of the Imamate Shiites. As for the first group they believe it is ordinary Imamate (leadership), while for the latter group they conceive it as a divine Imamate. Due to this, each of the Imams from the Ahl al-Bayt expect one of their children to succeed him in guiding the people. If that son dies in their lifetime, they will point to another one. They do not see any problem in that. But the death of one of the children of the Imams nominated for the Imamate, used to create a serious crisis in the ranks of the Imamate Shiites, who believe that the appointment of the Imam comes from Allah, the Exalted. It was very strange in their eyes, to witness the death of the appointed and nominated Imam in the lifetime of his father. They viewed that as a change, in the will of Allah, which they call 'bada', even though they found it difficult for Allah to change His will in such an important matter like the Imamate. This is due to the discomfort and doubt that might be created on the credibility of the Imams, and which might lead to abandoning the claim of a divine text on it. The Imamate Shiites have interpreted the death of Isma'il bin Ja'far Sadiq, whom they have nominated to succeed his father as 'bada'. Some of them rejected the idea of his nomination from the beginning. While yet another group rejected the fact that he died, and insisted that Isma'il hid himself from the people. The death of Isma'il has caused a serious upheaval in the Imamate thought, which led to the rejection of many of the Imamate Shiites of the belief that Allah appoints the Imam.

The same story was repeated again after about 100 years, when Imam Hadi announced the nomination of his son Sayyid Muhammad as his successor, but he died in his lifetime. He then gave

the will (of Imamate) to his brother Hassan Askari (232-260 A.H). He said to him: " O my son thank Allah as He has (chosen) you for an affair." (85)

All of Kulayni, Mufid, Tusi have reported from Abu Hashim Dawud bin Qasim Al-Ja'fri who said: " I was with Abu al-Hassan Askari at the time of the death of his father, Abu Ja'far, who pointed to him and indicated him." I do not think of myself, and I say that this is similar to the story of Ibrahim and Isma'il." Abu al-Hassan then turned to me and said: ' Yes O Abu Hashim, Allah changed His will (Bada) as regards Abu Ja'far, and He put in his place, Abu Muhammad, as he changed His will regarding Isma'il after he has been nominated (for the Imamate) by Abu Abdullah. It was as your self whispered onto you, but the misled rejected him...Abu Muhammad is my successor after me. He possesses all that you need. He has with him also the instrument and symbol of the Imamate. All praise is due to Allah." (86)

As it happened to the Isma'ilites, who rejected the death of Ismail bin Ja'far, some followers of Imam Hadi also rejected the death of his son Muhammad, and insisted on the claim of the non-cessation of his life and his occultation. They interpreted the announcement of his death by Hadi as a kind of (insinuation) Taqiyyah and concealment of the fact.

These people believed in the Imamate of Muhammad after his father and declared on that: that his father has nominated him for the Imamate, and informed them that he will succeed him. It is not permissible for the Imam to tell lie, nor the change in Divine will. Even though it appeared that he died. He did not die in reality. The only thing was that his father feared that something might happen to him so he hid him. He is the one with the affairs, the Mahdi. They believed in him similar to what the companions of Isma'il bin Ja'far claimed in respect of their master. (87)

After the death of Imam Hadi, a power tussle ensued between Ja'far bin Ali and his brother Hassan, to the extent that Askari said: " None of my fore fathers faced anything similar to what I am facing in terms of the doubt of this group, as regards (my Imamate). (88)

The same story of the death of Abdullah al-Aftah without an issue was repeated in the case of Hassan Askari, who died without indicating the existence of a son for him, nor did he give his will to any person, as the Imam after him, which led to the great crisis and perplexity in the ranks of the Imamate Shiites, and their division into 14 sects. Each one of them had its own doctrines. Some of them believed in the Imamate of his brother Ja'far; some joined the Muhammadites who believed that Muhammad bin Ali hid himself and so rejected his death; another group believed that the Imamate has ceased; some rejected the death of Hassan; some believed that he will return to life again; another group believed that he had a secret son, who was born during his life or after his death and that he is the Awaited Mahdi.

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CHAPTER SIX

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TWELVER- SHIISM

If we take a close look of the History of Shiism in the second and third centuries, and the sympathy and response of the Shiites to the various revolts that were led by leaders of the Ahl al-Bayt, like the revolt of Imam Zayd and his son, Yahya and his son, Isa, as well as the revolt of Muhammad bin Abdullah (Dhu al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah) and his brother Ibrahim, so also the revolt of Hussain Shahid Fakh and that of Muhammad bin Qasim and others, we will find that the general Shiite populace gather around the members of the Ahl al-Bayt without limiting the leadership (Imamate) to one particular lineage, or believing in a divine text on anyone of them, talkless of confining it to the children of Hassan or Hussain or to a vertical hereditary form till the day of Resurrection. We would also find that the Shiites generally do not subscribe to the theory of Divine Imamate, which was believed by some theologians secretly, and attributed to the members of the Ahl al-Bayt who were constantly dissociating themselves from it in reality and in the open.

If we would also focus our attention on the Imamate heritage during those two centuries (2nd – 3rd) we will find that the Imamate theory is open and extended to the day of Resurrection, and that it was not limited to a particular number of Imams or limited to a certain period of time. Even though the Imamate reached an impasse at the time of the death of Imam Hassan Askari, in the year 260 A.H, with no issue to succeed him, and without pointing to anyone to be the Imam after him, those who believe in the existence of a hidden son for him in the beginning, believe that the Imamate will continue in the children of that hidden son till the day of Judgement. They did not believe in the beginning that he was the last Imam, or that the Imams were only twelve (12).

We have cited in the previous chapter, various traditions that pointed to the continuity of the Imamate in the children and grandchildren, till the day of Resurrection. There are in the Shiite heritage tens, nay hundreds of such narrations that emphasize and confirm the continuity of the Imamate to the day of Resurrection. This supports the fact that the theory of Imamate was never limited to particular persons during the second and the third centuries of Hijrah.

Anyone who observes those popular narrations that point to the extension of the Imamate to the day of Judgment, will find that they are absolute, general and intended to be so, i.e there is no limitations to them. They express the divine Imamate theory, which is parallel to the theory of Shura, that also extends to the day of Resurrection. That was the situation in its first stages of inception, before reaching an impasse.

Based on the fact that the theory of Imamate in its initial days, extends the principle of the Imamate to the day of Resurrection, and was not limited to a particular number, the doctrine claims that:

‘Text was given only in the right of Imam Ali, and that the texts for subsequent Imams issue from the Imam just preceeding the new Imam, till the day of Resurrection. (1)

The theory also admitted the non-existence of clear texts from some of the Imams to those after them. It holds, in this regard, to ordinary wills and considers it as evidences on the Imamate (of the concerned). When there were not even ordinary wills for some of the Imams from their fathers, like Imam Sajjad, or it was combined for a number of brothers, it would be claimed that the evidence on the Imamate (in those cases) were miracles, and the knowledge of the Unseen; or being the elder or more knowledgeable; or the possession of the sword of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him).

In fact several narrations point to the fact that the Imams themselves do not know that they are Imams, or the persons to succeed them, till just moments before their death, talkless of the Imamate Shiites (the masses) , who used to be confused or perplexed or differed among

themselves after the death of each Imam. They used to implore all the Imams to appoint those to succeed them, and to name them clearly so that they will not die without knowing the new Imam. They several times became confused and perplexed. (2)

There are many other traditions, mentioned by Al-Hur al-Amili, Kulayni and Saffar, which discussed the issue of identifying the new Imam, by means of a number of features, like being the elder, or purity of birth, good upbringing, or not living a playful and wasteful youth, or due to a clear will or virtue or knowledge of the Unseen, or calmness, chastity and tranquility (3)

All this points to the continuity of the Imamate to the day of Resurrection in its initial stage, and its not being tied to any particular number.

THE BIRTH OF THE TWELVER- IMAM THEORY

In view of the Imamate theory reaching an impasse after the death of Imam Hassan Askari without an apparent issue, and the claim of his having a covert son in occultation, and his non-appearance for a very long period of time.... the fourth century of Hijrah witnessed a new development in the Imamate theory i.e. the emergence of Twelver-Imam (Ithna Ashriyyah) theory. It was a theory that emerged especially among the Musawites and the extremist wing that believes strongly in the law of vertical heredity, and strongly does not accept anything apart from that. That wing believes in the existence of a wing believes in the existence of a pre-determined list of names of the Imams from the Prophet of Allah (peace be upon him) comprising of (12) twelve names, being: Ali, Hassan Hussain, Ali bin Hussain, Muhammad bin Ali, Jafar bin Muhammad, Musa bin Ja'far, Ali bin Muhammad and Hassan bin Ali and that the last of them, Muhammad bin Hassan Askari. This was aimed at establishing the existence of the twelfth

Imam—Muhammad bin Hassan Askari whose existence is doubted by and discussed seriously in the ranks of the Imamate Shiites.

The Twelver-Imam theory sought support from the Hadiths of the Sunnis reported by Bukhari and Muslim on the occurrence of 'Haraj' (Killings) and mischief after the twelfth Caliph or Imam. And in order that the number of the previous Imams be compatible with these narrations, the Twelver-Imam Shiites also resorted to deleting the names of Imam Zayd, Imam Abdullah Al-Aftah and Imam Ahmad bin Musa, whose Imamates were believed by many Imamate Shiites (Fathites). As they also denied the Imamate of Ja'far bin Ali Hadi, and they added instead the name of Imam Muhammad bin Hassan Askari. They prepared a new list of nine (9) names from the children of Hussain, one after the other. They said: 'all these Imams were categorically mentioned by the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the preceding Imams'.

Kulayni has reported in the beginning of the fourth century of Hijrah in his work Al-Kafi, seventeen different traditions on the Twelve Imams, while Sheikh Muhammad bin Ali Saduq, who came after half a century, reported thirty-five traditions on the issue, in his book 'Ikmal al-Din'. These were complemented by another scholar-Muhammad bin Ali Al-Khazzaz at the end of the fourth century, in his work 'Kifayat al-Athar fi al-Nass ala al-A'imah al-Ithna Ashar, by narrating two hundred traditions.

The origin of this theory, according to the Shiite historian Mas'udi in his 'Al-Tanbih wa al-Ishraf'- was the book written by Salim bin Qays al-Hilali, which appeared in the fourth (4th) century, by an author said to be one of the companions of Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (peace be upon him). There were a number of Hadiths in that work ascribed to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and the Imams from Ahl al-Bayt, that indicate the names of the twelve Imams.

This theory was forced to abandon the Shiite and Imamate history, and the issue of ambiguity as regards the text, and the will, so also the confusion and perplexity of the Imamate Shiites in identifying the new Imam. It also has to bypass the case of 'bada' (change of opinion or will),

which came up twice in the time of Imam Sadiq and Imam Mahdi. The claim that this idea was existing from the time of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), this was despite the general admission regarding the birth of the Imamate theory in the beginning of the second century of Hijrah on the hands of Hisham bin Al-Hakam, Mumin al-Taq and Hisham bin Salim al-Jawaliqi.

Saduq reported the objection of the Zaydite Shiites on the twelve Imams, and their statement that: The narration that shows that the Imams are twelve only was a statement fabricated by the Imamate Shiism recently, and they produced many false Hadiths in that regard. They buttressed their position by pointing to the fact that the Shiites used to be divided to several sects after the death of each Imam and lack of knowledge of the next Imam. As they also point to the Idea of 'bada' (change of opinion) as regards Isma'il and Muhammad bin Ali, which contradicts the claim of a pre-determined list of names of the Imams. The death of Zurarah without his knowing who will be the Imam after Sadiq is another evidence. Saduq responded to Zaydites saying: "The Imamate Shiites did not say that the entire Shiites knew the twelve Imams. He did not deny that Zurarah was not aware of the Hadith. But he later took into consideration the status of Zurarah, and the impossibility of his being ignorant of any Hadith of this nature, being the greatest disciple of Imam Sadiq. He therefore changed (his mind) and said: Zurarah might have concealed that, as a form of taqiyyah (insinuation). He later on abandoned his views again after little time, and said: 'Kadhim has required of him to give himself to Allah, for his lack of knowledge of the Imam, because anyone who doubts him has left the religion of Allah.'" (5)

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ATTEMPTING TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF CHILDHOOD

The Twelver-Imam doctrine was built on very strict and uncompromising principles, which makes it a condition that inheritance has to be vertical, even if the Imam has to be a small child. It puts aside the moderate Imamate doctrine (Al -Fathiyyah), that allows the Imamate of two brothers, if the first Imam was barren or his issue was still small (at the time of his death). This might be due the inception of the Twelver- Imam after the period of the Leaders of Ahl al-Bayt with tens of years. It was never present with the Imams. Like wise the earlier Shiites—so as to interact with them and perceive the extent of their ability to react in the childhood days.

The leaders of the Twelver-Imam doctrine found themselves confronting the Quran, which advises controlling and taking care of the child till he reaches the age of maturity, where it says: “ And try orphans (as regards their intelligence) until they reach the age of marriage; if then you find sound judgment in them, release their property to them.”

As a resolution of this problem they accepted the Imams from the general import of the verse. Sheikh Mufid said: ‘ If someone says: “ O you Imamate Shiites why do you say that you believe in twelve Imams--- and you know that among them (the Imams) there was one whom his father left, while he was a small child, who has not reached the age of puberty, and is not even near that age, like Abu Ja’far Muhammad bin Ali bin Musa, his father died while he was only seven years old. So also your so-called Qaim, whose age at the time of the death of his father, according to many, was only five years old. We have known through the common practice of all times that anyone of that age would not have reached puberty, nor comes near it. Allah, the Exalted has said: “ and try orphans (as regards their intelligence) until they reach the age of marriage; if then you find sound judgment in them, release their property to them.” If Allah the most high has made it compulsory to take care of the wealth of these two souls, because of his injunctions on all orphans, it become invalid for them to be Imams. This is because the Imam is responsible for the creation in all affairs, this worldly and otherworldly. It is not valid that the custodian of the wealth of Allah from charity Khums (one-fifths), the one trusted on the Shariah and all injunctions, one who is the Imam (leader) of fuqaha (jurists), judges, and rulers, one who takes cares of a great number of intelligent people in different sectors, will be the one who has no control even a single pence from his personal wealth, one not trusted even to think for himself, one being taken care of due to his tender age, one of lower intelligence, due to the discrepancy, contradiction and possibility of that. This evidence show the invalidity of especially the Imamate schools. As a response... Allah, the Exalted has denied any excuse on the perfection of the one on whom he has imposed the Imamate and has demonstrated the infallibility of the one appointed as a leader. He has explained through both analogical and revealed evidences, the Imamate of these two Imams. That necessitates their being exempted from the general orphans, to whom the statement was directed.

He also added,” The Imamate Shiism is not having any remorse due to its doctrines, especially the verse on the control (of orphans' wealth), due to rational evidence, to be accepted unanimously as I will mention... that is, there is no difference in the Ummah that the usage of this verse is restricted to those with lower intelligence, with no perfection that necessitates solace. It is

also not to be applied to one who possesses of intelligence what those attaining the age of puberty possess, so it is invalid to apply it to the Imams.”

Mufid did attempt to deny the evidence of generality, and the generality of the verse of controlling (the wealth of a minor orphan), in order to free him from any blame so he pioneered a new trend in Juristic research. He said: Restriction can happen on a statement, but it cannot occur on common reasoning.... Reason necessitates perfection and infallibility on the generality of the Imams. If evidence has indicated the imamate of these two souls the verse will have to be restricted to other than them without doubt... Even though generalization has no form in our view, so it becomes necessary to encompass the genus with the same term. That will necessitate evidence accompanied to it. So anytime it becomes devoid of evidence, it becomes imperative to abstain (from any judgment)... There is no evidence to show the generalization of this verse.” (6)

Despite the claim of Mufid that there is difference (among scholars) as regards the attributes of small Imams as a demand with importunity... and he transcends the serious differences on them, among the Imamate Shiites, he attempted to bring something entirely new, and not yet established... that is by attempting to establish exception nature for the small Imams based on the issue of infallibility and imamate, that are yet to be established (with regard to them). This is nothing other than restricting the Qur'anic injunction by means of conjecture... It is clear that Sheikh Mufid gave his conjecture obtained from philosophy, the term of reason: He also claimed the existence of a text on the Imamate of Jawwad based on traditions from single narrators, as he also claim the existence of a consensus, which has no effect neither with the Shiites, nor the general Muslims on the Imamate of Jawwad, Hadi and the rest of the imams. He then restricted the generalization of the Qumran... As it that is not sufficient, he denied the general import of the verse on controlling the orphan's wealth, to exclude the children Imams.

Though the philosophical conjectural evidences and weak conflicting single narrator traditions, cannot disprove the generalization in the Qur'an nor restrict it, or restrict the general injunction, historical realities deny the existence of any special case where the existence of any special case where the Imam was a small child. The history of Shiism points that: Imam Jawwad for example gave his will to his son Ali Hadi, through Abdullah bin Musawir, and made an overseer on his inheritance, including gardens, wealth expenditures, slaves e.t.c, till the time when Ali bin Muhammad became matured. He wrote the will and made Ahmad bin Khalid a witness to it, and that was on Sunday 3rd Dhul Hijjah, 220 A. H. Mufid however, was eager to carry on the intellectual debate seriously after more than 100 years of its inception, and without him witnessing any Imam during his childhood, so that he establishes something on their personal situation, and so as to know if they possess the qualifications of unnatural exception? Sheikh Mufid will not refer to history so as to establish his doctrine on the basis of reality... He feels satisfied with late and abstract philosophical theorization, after a period of 100 years ... He follows by that an unscientific method to reach the truth.

TRANSCENDING THE PROBLEM OF BADA (CHANGE OF WILL)

If the process of fabricating narrations was not a difficult or an impossible act, transcending the problem of 'bada' (change of will) was a very difficult task. The pivots of the Twelver- Imam Shiites who were claiming that there was a predetermined list of names of the twelve Imams, prepared long before that, tried to interpret bade that it is 'bada' (change of will) from Allah, and the claim of the loss of the command affair on the Imamate of Kadhim and Askari and its reappearance after the death of Ismail and Sayyid Muhammad Sheikh Saduq has however, vehemently refused to admit the existence of the Hadith on 'bada' and said, while addressing Zaydism: "Why do you say that Ja'far bin Muhammad has appointed (by text), Ismail as the Imam? What was that narration? And who was behind it? How was it received? This was merely a narration borne by some people believing in the Imamate of Ismail. It has no basis in his statement:"

"Nothing makes Allah (to change His will) like the case of my son Ismail. He says: Nothing has appeared to Allah as it appears in Ismail my son, as He received him in my lifetime to demonstrate that he was not the Imam after me. The Bada being attributed to the Imamate Shiites means the appearance of His affair. (8)

All of Saffar, Kulayni, Mufid and Tusi have however reported from Abu Hisham Dawud bin Qasim Al-Jafari, a Hadith which establishes the occurrence of 'bada' regarding Ismail and Sayyid Muhammad. It came clearly in that: " Sadiq pointed to Ismail and Hadi pointed to Muhammad but later changed him with and Muhammad (Askari)."(9)

Saffar, Kulayni, Mufid and Tusi did narrate a tradition from Imam Hadi who says to his son Hassan: "O my son generate them gratitude to Allah as he has generated a new affair regarding you." (10)

Saduq has overlooked such traditions and has relieved himself of the task of disputing and refuting them and has completely neglected them, even though, they have been agreed upon by the earlier and later scholars of Hadith.

Despite the frank nature of such traditions on the issue of 'bada' as regards the Imamate, Sheikh Mufid tried to re- interpret the meaning of "bada" on the basis of the change in the knowledge of Allah or His will, which appears in the word generate to another meaning of 'appearance.' He says: the meaning in the statement of the Imamate Shiites: that Allah has changed His will in such and such, it means: It appears to Him in such and such, and the meaning of 'appears

to Him' is appears from Him. So what we believe in the meaning of 'bada': is appearance, this is limited to what appears of action whose occurrence is beyond human observation/sight. (11)

In the same way Sheikh Tusi tried to re-interpret the word 'bada' by saying: 'hat came in the tradition of his statement 'Allah had another will in that' means; 'It appears from Allah that", people were thinking that Ismail bin Ja'far was the Imam after his father, but when he died, they knew the invalidity of that, and they became certain of the Imamate of Musa. In the same manner, they were thinking of the Imamate of Muhammad bin Ali after his father, but when he died in the lifetime of his father, they recognized the futility of what they thought. He said: " When Muhammad died, the affair of Allah regarding him appeared, and that he was not appointed as the Imam, as it appeared in (the case of) Ismail in a similar way. Not that there was a text on him, and it appeared to him later for someone else, for that is not permissible in Allah's sight, who knows everything and all consequences. (12).

Sheikh Tusi did emphasize for the second time on, the issue of Imamate will not accept 'bada' since it will lead to loosing confidence in anything from Allah. (13)

Sheikh Ali bin Babawaih Saduq has refused to accept 'bada' in naming the Imams and considered such like prayer, and fasting, which can never be abrogated. He said: It will not be on Allah to change (His will) in the Imam, in naming him or his appearance. What is the difference, if I say: 'the Imamate is one of the five laws (Shariah)' from one who accept 'bada' in prayer and fasting and the remaining four laws since the authority for the four is one, that is the Imamate. If it is possible that Allah abrogate the source of the law, then it is possible to abrogate its branch. I seek refuge in Allah from advocating the abrogation of Shariah and the changing of religion, after Allah has made Muhammad (peace be upon him) the last of the prophets and his Shariah the last of all laws, and has made adhering to his religion and Shariah till the day of Judgment and the Resurrection:(14)

Ibn Babawaih also attempted to interpret the narrated traditions on bada (insinuation) after noticing the nonpossibility of a predetermined list of names of the Imams. He said: " Imamate cannot be changed ...glorified is Allah that he places as leaders of his servants, those who go contrary to his command and change their ways; or that his wisdom will propose a man fro the protection of Islam and that he will deviate be swayed away from it will place it (Imamate) in the one that will be affected mentally due to old age and long life, exalted is Allah high above all that they say." (15)

In reality, if the Imamate is from Allah it will be impossible to notice 'bada'(non-fulfillment) in it, and it will be difficult to interpret 'bada' even with appearance, for that will create a kind of confusion in the Shiite circles, and they will loose confidence in the words of their Imams, as it happened in history.

But instead of the theologians studying the traditions of Ahl al-Bayt and the historical facts that emphasize that some Imams pointed to their sons being Imams, but then they died in their lifetimes, and then they pointed to others.They concluded from that,that the Imamate is not from Allah, as the leaders of the Ahl al-Bayt have been saying. Instead of this the theologians

(Mutakallimun) from Twelver- Imam Shiites, attempted interpreting 'bada' in a straining manner so as to conform to the Imamate theory. They were, however forced to admit the ambiguity in the texts as regards some Imams, and also the lack of knowledge of the Shiites and some of their leaders (imams) of the pre-determined list of their names.

Sheikh Baqir Sharif Al-Qurashi says in his book 'Hayat al-Imam Hassan al-Askari'...Anyhow these narrations were not related to 'bada', they only indicate that Allah has brought to the open the Imamate of Hassan Askari which was hidden before to the Shiites."

In addition to the issue of 'bada' which clearly contradicts the existence of predetermined list of names of the twelve Imams, there were also some traditions in the book of Salim bin Qays al-Hilali and 'al-Kafi' of Kulayni, which mention that the number of Imams is thirteen (13). On the basis of that a sect has emerged called 'Thirteen-Imam' Shiites under the leadership of the grand son of Uthman bin Said Al-Umari, i.e Ahmad bin Hibat al-Lah al-Katib.

Due to this the doctrine of 'twelve Imams' was not initially accepted without difficulty among the Imamate Shiites. Saduq has bluntly said: " We do not accept that (from the devotional point), except by confessing the existence of twelve Imams, and believing what the twelfth mentioned after him."

Saduq also reported a number of traditions on the likelihood of extending the Imamate after Mahdi, and its not being confined or limited to him. He reported from Imam Ali a tradition on the ambiguity of the situation after the leader (Qaim), and that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) has taken a covenant from him, not to tell anyone about that except Hassan and Hussain. He also said: "Don't ask of what will happen after that, because my beloved has taken a covenant from me not to tell anyone save my family members." (17)

Anyhow the Twelver-Imam theory differed from the Imamate doctrine in that the latter revolved around the Imams from Ahl al-Bayt, those living in reality, and it claims that they are more deserving of the rule and Caliphate than the Umayyad and Abbasid rulers. It also believes that Allah appointed the Imams. The Twelver-Imam doctrine on the other hand, revolves around the occult Imam without any trace in life, i.e. the twelfth Imam Muhammad bin Hassan Askari, whom it claims to have been born in mysterious circumstances, and gone into hiding, and would re-appear in future.

The belief in the existence of the twelfth Imam, his occultation and waiting for him, led to the loss of political meaning for the Twelver-Imam doctrine, which in turn led to the withdrawal of the Twelver-Imam Shiism from the political stage and their extinction in the fourth century of Hijrah, giving way to the other Shiite sects like Zaydites and Isma'ilites to occupy the scene.

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PART TWO

THE MAHDI THEORY (MUHAMMAD BIN HASSAN ASKARI)

INTRODUCTION:

THE PERIOD OF CONFUSION AND PERPLEXITY

THE DEATH OF IMAM ASKARI

The death of Imam Hassan Askari (A.S) in Samirra'i in the year 260 A.H. without his declaring a successor, and the will which he gave to his mother called 'Hadith' led to an explosion of a serious crisis in the ranks of the Musawite Imamate Shiites, who believe in the necessity of the continuity of the divine Imamate till the day of Resurrection including the appearance of doubt, perplexity and ambiguity, as well as questions on the fate of the Imamate after Askari. In response to these questions, the Imamate Shiites became divided into fourteen (14) sects. This was stated by Nubakhti in 'Firaq al-Shiah', Sad bin Abdullah Ash'ari al-Qummi in 'Al-Maqalat wa al-firaq', Ibn Abi Zaynab al-Nu'mani in his 'Al-Ghaybah', Saduq in 'Ikmal al-Din', Mufid in 'Al-Irshad', and Tusi in 'Al-Ghaybah' and so on and so forth.

Shiite historians say that: 'Ja'far bin Ali Hadi the brother of Hassan, tried to bring into his possession all the inheritance of the Imam. When the news of his death reached his mother, while she was in Madinah she set out till she reached "Surr Man Ra'a", and she then claimed the possession of a will, and that was confirmed by the court." (1)

The Shiite historians also mention that a slave girl of Imam Askari called Saqil claimed that she was pregnant from him, which caused the distribution of his inheritance to be delayed. Caliph Mu'tamid took the slave girl to his palace and he directed his wives and maids and the wives of al-Wathiq and the wives of the Chief judge-Ibn Abi al-Shawarib to take good care of her and confirm her claim of pregnancy or otherwise... Those given the task of watching over her kept close eye on her, till it became clear to them the falsity of the claim of conception: Hassan's inheritance was then distributed between his mother and brother, Ja'far. (2)

THE CLAIM OF JA'FAR BIN ALI TO THE IMAMATE

As the Imamate is usually established through a will from the previous Imam to the succeeding one, the brother of Imam Askari, Ja'far bin Ali Hadi, who used to compete with his brother for the Imamate while he was still alive, exploited the apparent vacuum of the non-existence of a son for his brother, and the lack of any will for him or any indication to anyone, he exploited it by claiming that he was the Imam. He said to the Shiites: "My brother has passed away without leaving behind any successor either male or a female. I am the one to whom he gave his will". He also wrote to some of his loyalists in Qum—which was an important Shiite center then, calling on them to him, telling them that he was the leader after his brother, claiming that he has the knowledge of the lawful and the unlawful that would make others require him and some other kinds of learning. (3)

Saduq transmitted in his: 'Ikmal al-Din' p. 475, a tradition from Abu al-Adyan al-Basri—whom he described as a servant of Imam Askari and his messenger to the Shiites of different cities—saying that, the general Shiites population passed their condolences to Ja'far, as well as congratulated him, among them was 'Al-Na'ib al-Awwal, Uthman bin Said al-Umari.

Nubakhti, Ash'ari al-Qummi and Mufid mentioned that some of the Shiites (supporters) of Imam Askari, admitted the apparent non-existence of any son for Askari, and believed in the Imamate of his brother Ja'far, and accepted some of what the Fathites (Al-Fathiyyah) accepted—those who believe in both the Imamate of Abdullah and Musa the two sons of Ja'far Sadiq, not making 'vertical inheritance' condition for the Imamate.

The leader of those people and their main advocate in that was a man from Kufah called Ali bin al-Tahi al-Khazzaz, and the scholars of Bani Fidal, and the sister of Faris bin Hatim bin Mahawaih al-Qazwini. (4)

The people of Qum were on the verge of responding to Ja'far, since they do not know anyone other than him. They gathered around their leader, Ahmad bin Ishaq and wrote to Ja'far responding on those issues, demanding from him to reply on a number of issues, they said: "Our predecessors did ask your forefathers on these (issues) and they replied them, and we depend on those replies and take guidance from them, so reply us similar to the way your gone fore-fathers replied so that we perform the duties you impose on us as we used to do for them.". They sent a delegation to Ja'far to converse with him. The letter was received, and they asked him in the beginning on the manner of the transfer of Imamate to him in the presence of a tradition saying that it is not permissible that the Imamate be transferred to two brothers after Hassan and Hussain. Ja'far resorted to the claim of 'bada' (change of will) from Allah due to the lack of issue from his brother Hassan. (5)

Khusaibi says in 'Al-Hidayah al-Kubra': " The delegation remained with him for some time demanding from him the reply of the issues raised, but he did not reply, nor did he reply on the letter at all." (6)

Saduq, Tusi and Sadr however, did not discuss this simple problem, which will not be difficult for anyone who claims the Imamate like Ja'far, they only say: "The delegation asked Ja'far on the Unseen (al-Ghayb), and demanded from him to tell them the amount of wealth they were carrying from Qum and their owners. He replied: " Hassan used to tell that", he

abstained from speaking on the al-Ghayb (unseen) , and denied attributing it to his brother. (7)

Khusaibi says: “ Some people from Qum, namely, Abu al-Hassan bin Thawabah and Abu Abdullah al-Jamal, and Abu Ali al-Sa’igh and Al-Qazwini, used to take money from the Shiites in the name of Ja’far to utilize it and will not send it to him and they accused him of lying. This shows that a good number of Shiites from Qum do believe in the Imamate of Ja’far in reality, and were sending money to him.” (8).

THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN THE CESSATION OF THE IMAMATE

As Nubakhti, Ash’ari al-Qummi, Kulayni, Mufid, Tusi, Saduq and Al-Hurr al-Amili say: “ A portion of Imamate Shiites accepted the doctrine that the Imamate has come to an end, and has ceased and the belief in the Interval (Fatrah), similar to that period between one Messenger and the other. They depended in this on some traditions from the two Imams Baqir and Sadiq, on the possibility of having more Imams or the cessation of the Imamate, especially when Allah will be displeased with His creation. They believed that was the time. (9)

THOSE WHO BACKED DOWN

Two earlier Shiite historians contemporaneous to that period, i.e. Nubakhti and Ash’ari al-Qummi say.” The death of Imam Hassan Askari without a clear issue, in whom the Imamate will continue led some Shiites to rethink their position on the Imamate of Askari himself, as some Musawite Shiites did one hundred years before as regards the belief in the Imamate of Abdullah al-Aftah bin Ja’far Sadiq, who became Imam after his father, but did not leave believed an issue in whom the Imamate should continue.

They believed the claim of the Imamate of Hassan was an error and a mistake, and it is incumbent upon us to rethink our position on it, and to accept the Imamate of Ja’far. As Hassan died without an issue that vindicates that he made a false claim to the Imamate. This is because according to our consensus, the Imam will not die, until he left behind an apparent issue to succeed him, one who is well-known, to whom he will give his will, and appoint him as the Imam. Imamate will never continue in two brothers after Hassan and Hussain. So the Imam without doubt is Ja’far through the will of his father to him.

The reason for this change of opinion, as regards the Imamate of Askari, was their belief in the law of vertical inheritance, and the non-permissibility of the transfer of the Imamate to a brother, nephew, uncle or cousin.

THOSE WHO BELIEVED IN ASKARI BEING THE MAHDI

Another group of the Shiites denied the death of Imam Askari and claimed that the was the Mahdi, who went into occultation, based on the belief that it is not permissible for the Imam to die without a known and apparent issue, because the world can never be without an Imam. They considered the hiding of the Imam, a kind of occultation from them. (11)

Some of them admitted his death, but claimed that he returned to life again. That was based on a tradition on the meaning of Qa'im: "he returns (to life) after his death." He will live without an issue. If he had a son, who confirmed his death and his nonreturn, because the Imamate will be established for his successor and he will not give the will (of Imamate) to anyone... There is no doubt that he was the Qa'im. Hassan bin Ali has undoubtedly died without an issue or successor; he did not give the will (to anyone), as he has not any will or anyone to receive the will (from him)... There is no doubt that he was the Qaim (the standing one), and that he is alive after his death. They reported: The Qaim—when the news of his return to life reached the people- they will say: "How can so- and -so be the Imam after his bones had become like dust? He is living today in occultation. He will appear and instructs the people, filling the world with justice, as it was filled with injustice." (12)

Of them were those who said that: "He was not called Qa'im except that he returns to life after death". These people have fabricated or imported many traditions in this context from some earlier Waqifite Shiite movements. (13)

Saduq says: "Those people were called Waqifites on Hassan. They did claim that the occultation happened to him, for the validity of occultation in their view and their ignorance of its place." (4)

MUHAMMADITES AND NAFISITES

Some of those who rethought the Imamate of Askari, due to the lack of an issue for him, believed in the Imamate of his brother Muhammad, who died seven years before the death of his father Hadi. They denied the death of Muhammad, and claimed that his father did point to him and appointed him as the Imam, and had mentioned him by his name and person--- this is what was agreed by all. It is not possible for the Imam to point through will to one who was not the Imam. Therefore he did not die in reality, as was apparent. His father had rather, hidden him due to insinuation (Ta'iqiyah) as Imam Sadiq hid his son Ismail – according to the Isma'ilites, so he was the Awaited Mahdi. (15) This sect came to be known as the Muhammadites.

A group from this sect said later that, Muhammad bin Ali did die, and that he gave the will to a servant of his father called 'Nafis'. He handed over to him books, different kinds of knowledge and the sword and whatever the Ummah would need, and he advised him: "If I died, give that to Ja'far". (16)

This sect took a very violent stand as regards Imam Hassan Askari. They considered him an unbeliever, so also all those who believe in his Imamate. They exceeded bounds in the case of Ja'far and claimed that he was the Qa'im. This extremist sect was known as the Nafisites. (17)

THE WAQIFITES

In contrast to the above extremists there was another sect of the followers of Imam Hassan Askari who believed, as a result of shock and bewilderment, that the Imam did not die, but has entered an occultation and that he was the Mahdi. That was on the basis of the impossibility of the death of the Imam without an apparent known issue, since the earth can never be without an Imam according to their doctrine. (18)

These groups later separated into several other groups... Among them were those who admitted the death of Imam Hassan, but added that he returned to life after a little while, that was in accordance with a tradition on the meaning of the word Qa'im: one who returns to life after his death. Among them were those who claimed that he died and did not return to life, but will return to life in future. (19)

These groups have incorporated some traditions (into their thought) from some early Waqifite Shiite movements, and were called Waqifites of Ali, they claimed that he did go into occultation and that he was the Awaited Mahdi.

THE PERPLEXED

The death of Imam Askari without an apparent issue led to a crisis that led in turn, the Imamate Shiites who believe in the continuation of the Imamate to the day of Resurrection, it led them to the search and exploration of a likely son for Imam Askari, who hide for some reason or another, like fear of his being attacked for example. Some of them refrained from any statements, waiting for an end to the crisis. They did not claim or believed in the Imamate of Ja'far, as they did not also believe in an end to the Imamate, nor did they claim that Hassan Askari was the Mahdi. Rather they said: " We do not know what to say in all these.... we are confused. We do not know that Hassan bin Ali had a son or not, nor that the Imamate was valid for Ja'far or Muhammad. There are a lot of conflicting opinions. We only say: Hassan bin Ali was an Imam whose obedience was incumbent on all. His Imamate was established, but he has died, and we are convinced of that. The world will never be without an authority (Imam). Then we stop here and will not claim the Imamate of anyone after him...since we do not believe that he left any successor, whose affair is not clear to us. We cannot be sure of the Imamate of any of the children of others, as there is a consensus among the Shiites that the Imamate of an Imam cannot be established, except through a clear will from his father." (20)

THE JENINITES

In the midst of that atmosphere of doubt and confusion, conflict and search for the truth, some Imamate Shiites depended on the claim of a slave girl, 'Saqil' or 'Narjis' that she was pregnant from Hassan at the time of his death. They claimed that she delivered a child for him eight months after his death. The child was however, hidden; no one knows his name, or his hiding-place. They depended on a tradition in this regards, which they reported from Imam Rida in which he says: "You will be tried by means of an embryo in the womb of his mother, and by means of a suckling child." (21)

Some of those who accepted the existence of that pregnancy at the time of (his) death also claimed that the pregnancy continued in the womb of the slave girl for an uncertain period of time. They believed in the inevitability of the delivery of the slave girl of a male child, in whom the Imamate will continue, and then in his children to the day of Resurrection. (22)

In so much as delivery after death is normal and possible, the claim of the continuation of the pregnancy in the womb for an uncertain period, is not reasonably acceptable. It is rather seriously rejected, more so that the slave girl Saqil or Nargis disappeared in the heat of the events, or she died. No one was able to watch her or see the result of her pregnancy after that. It was not far in an extremist atmosphere, which is far away from reason and known customs that any group can claim what it wishes, in terms of false claims, or statements, theories and imagination.

THOSE WHO CLAIM THE EXISTENCE OF PRE- DETERMINED SON (TWELVER-IMAM SHIITES)

Despite the fact that those Shiites who searched for a son for Askari were not able to arrive at any result, and that confusion was engulfing the general Imamate Shiites, so also the ambiguity surrounding the issue of succession, and the conflicting views tearing the people apart, despite all these, some of the companions of Imam Hassan Askari were whispering in secrecy that he had a son born two or three or five or seven or eight years before his death. They claimed that they saw him during the lifetime of his father, and that they were in contact with him. They demanded from the general Shiite masses to stop their search for him or declaring his name, which they forbade. (23)

They interpreted the claim of the slave girl, Saqil of her pregnancy at the time of the death (of the Imam), as an attempt on her part to conceal the existence of the child secretly.

Those who claimed the existence of a concealed son for Imam Askari were known as the Twelver-Imam Shiites.

THE AGE OF PERPLEXITY (CONFUSION)

The belief that Imam Hassan Askari had a son was an esoteric and confidential statement from some of his companions after his death. The matter was never agreed upon or based on clear common knowledge among the Shiites of that time. That was why there was atmosphere of confusion as regards who will succeed the Imam. The situation was very tense.

Many contemporary scholars of that time wrote works discussing the perplexity that has gripped the Shiites, ways of cooling out of it. Among these scholars was Sheikh Ali bin Babawaih Saduq who wrote a book he entitled: "Imamate and Enlightenment from Perplexity"(Al-Imamah wa al-Tabsirah min al-Hayrah).

This situation of perplexity continued up to the middle of the fourth century of Hijrah, as sheikh Muhammad bin Ali Saduq mentioned in the introduction of his work 'Ikmal al-Din', the confusing state that has descended on the Shiites. He said: " I discovered that the majority of the Shiites who come to me have been confused by the occultation, and an ambiguity has accrued on to them on the affairs of the Qa'im." Kulayni, Nu'mani and Saduq reported a large number of traditions, which emphasized the occurrence of perplexity after the occultation of the in-charge (Imam), and the differences among the Shiites, and their being scattered at that time. So also the allegations of some against others, as regards lies, disbelief, spitting in their faces and cursing them and their capsize like ships, due to strong waves from the sea, or like breaking into pieces of glass or pottery. (24)

Muhammad bin Abi Zaynab Nu'mani said in 'Al- Ghaybah' while describing the confusing state that has engulfed the Shiites of that time. " The majority of them were saying (in the background): Where is he? How can these happen? For how long he will be absent? How long he will live? He has now more than eight years. Among them were those who believed he was dead; among them were those who denied his birth and rejected his existence at once, and mocked those who believed in him; among them were those who believed the period (of occultation) will be long." (25).

He says: " What kind of confusion is more severe than the present one, which affected a large number of people, taking them away from this affair (Imamate)? Those left in it were very few due to the doubt of people. (26)

This shows that the issue of the existence of a son for Imam Askari was never an agreed matter among the ranks of the Imamate Shiites at that time. And that the claims of consensus, common knowledge made by some as regards the traditions on the existence, birth and Mahdism of the twelfth Imam (Muhammad bin Hassan Askari) were not existing (not true) at that time....

We, therefore have to put a question mark on the later conflicting claims of consensus and agreement, which contradict historical facts...more so that the claim of consensus and agreement does not preclude second thoughts, criticism and research. In addition to the fact that consensus (Ijma) does not constitute an alternative evidence to the scientific evidence in the sight of the Twelver-Imam Shiites ... In accordance with which the Jurists say: Ijma' will be taken in the absence of a legal evidence. And if we know that a particular claim depends on traditional or rational evidences, we have to review those evidences and not hold onto Ijma'. It is well known that the claim of the birth of the twelfth Imam Muhammad bin Hassan Askari, will present historical, given (revealed) and rational evidences. It is necessary; that

we review and confirm these evidences ourselves, and our non-submission and following theologians (Mutakallimin) or submitting to their claims, theories and juristic analogies without scrutinizing them.

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SECTION ONE:

“EVIDENCES” FOR THE EXISTENCE OF IMAM MUHAMMAD BIN HASSAN ASKARI

CHAPTER ONE:

PHILOSOPHICAL EVIDENCE

A- REASON FIRST

The Twelver- Imam Shiites, who believe in the existence of a concealed son for Imam Hassan Askari, and in the continuation of his life to date, and to the day he will appear in the future, present several evidences on that, which can be divided into different types. On the top of them is the philosophical or rational evidence. What does this evidence presents? And on what is it based?

It is says:

Firstly: The necessity of the existence of the Imam (leader) on earth, and the impossibility of the world remaining in confusion without a government.

Secondly: The necessity of infallibility of the Imam from Allah, and the impossibility of a government of jurists (Fuqaha) of integrity or ordinary rulers.

Thirdly: The necessity of the existence of the Imam and confining it (imamate) to the Ahl al-Bayt, and in the children of Ali and Hussain to the day of Resurrection

Fourthly: The belief in the death of Imam Hassan Askari, and the non-acceptance of his occultation or Mahdism.

Fifthly: Sticking to the law of vertical inheritance, and the impossibility of the transfer of the Imamate to two brothers after Hassan and Hussain.

The theologians who wrote on the Mahdism of Muhammad bin Hassan Askari, in the old and now, used to present the rational evidence as the most important evidence on his existence. They gave it a lot of importance in the process of argumentation. Sheikh Saduq has transmitted the statement of a contemporary Shiite theology: Abu Sahl Ismail bin Ali Nubakhti who showed that the evidence on the existence of Imam Mahdi is rational. He mentioned in his book 'Al-Tanbih', which he wrote thirty(30) years, after the occultation: "The Shiites knew of the existence of the son of Hassan through evidence, as they knew Allah and the Prophet (peace be upon him) and other religious issues through evidence." (1)

Sheikh Mufid (338-413 A.H) opined that: " The rational evidence that requires the existence of the infallible Imam at all times, is sufficient on the existence of the son of Hassan (Askari) and confining the Imamate in him." He also said: This is a principle that will not need any narration of the text for it stands on itself in the matter of reason, and its validity is through evidence." (2)

Sheikh Al-Karajiki (427 A.H) had employed the rational evidence based on the necessity of the Imamate and the necessity of the infallibility of the Imam, in the process of establishing the existence of a son of Imam Hassan Askari, and confirming his Imamate and the validity of his occultation, that is by confirming infallibility in him and the fallibility of all other claimants to the Imamate. (3)

Sayyid Murtada Alam al-Huda (355-436 A.H) said: " Reason requires the necessity of leadership at all times: That leader will have to be infallible ... If these two principle have been established, then it must be said that: The owner of the affairs (Imam) himself, because the attribute that was required, and its necessity as shown, is not found except in him, and occultation will be pursued in a necessary manner, without any doubt... and also because if the Imamate of one whose Imamate have been established through selection, due to the nonavailability of the attribute indicated by reason; and the statement of the one who differed (from him), of the extremist Shiites, then there is no alternative to our stand; it must necessarily be valid, otherwise the Ummah has lost the truth." (4)

Sayyid Murtada denied the need for witnessing the Imam, in order to believe in him, after the possibility of knowing him through rational argumentation. He refuted in his 'Al-Shafi' the statement of the Mutazilite scholar-Qadi Abd al-Jabbar al-Hamadani, where he denied in his 'Al-Mughni' the existence of the twelfth Imam, saying:" The Shiite belief in infallibility has led them to establishing persons that do not exist. They have established in these times one Imam characterized with a lineage and name, without anyone knowing him or having the slightest idea of his person or his signs." Murtada said in Al-Shafi: " This his statement was built on mere claim and sheer suggestion. We have established the necessity of the Imamate at all times, in what cannot be disputed or refuted." (5)

Sheikh Tusi (385-460 A.H) said in his 'Talkhis al-Shafi': Anyone who believes in the necessity of considering rational evidence, believes in the existence of the owner of the times (Mahdi) and his Imamate." (6)

He said in 'Masa' il Kalamiyah Al-Masa' il al-Ashr': " The Imam today is the heir, the evidence, the Qa'im, the Awaited Mahdi Muhammad bin Hassan the owner of the times.... The Mahdi is alive and existing from the time of his father Hassan Askari till our present time on the following evidence: At any time must have Imam, who is infallible, this is incumbent on Allah at all times." (7)

Sheikh Tusi in his *Al-Ghaybah*’ classified the evidences on the birth of the owner of the time (Mahdi) into two categories, viz. rational and textual (traditional). He emphasized on the importance of the first group in an independent manner, and said: “ On the issue of the birth of the Mahdi (Sahib al- Zaman) and its validity, there are rational as well as traditional evidences. As for the rational, they are: If his Imamate is established as we have proved (through evidences) and all the parts except that which confirm his Imamate invalidated, we will know by that the validity of his birth, even if no tradition has been reported at all on that. ” (8)

He said after presenting the evidence of infallibility, and that the Imam must be infallible and also that the truth is always in the Ummah he said: “ If these principles are established, the Imamate of the Mahdi (Sahib al-Zaman) will be established, because anyone who is certain on establishing infallibility for the Imam, is also certain that he is also the Imam.” (9)

Tusi attempted to refute the claims of different Shiite sects like al-Kisaniyyah, al-Nawusiyyah, al-Fathiyyah, al-Waqifiyyah and others, among the sects that claim infallibility for their Imams. He reached the following conclusion from that: ‘ The necessity of the validity of the Imamate of the son of Hassan; the validity of his occultation; he denied, with the existence of that, the need for strained statements in establishing his birth and the reason for his occultation, because the truth will never abandon the Ummah.” (10)

Al-Fadl al-Nisapuri in ‘ Raudah al-Wa’idhin’ proved the existence of Sahib al-Zaman’ (Mahdi) and his Imamate on the basis of “ what reason will require of valid evidences on the impossibility of the world being devoid of the infallible, who will be a source of compassion for responsible believers.” (11)

In the same way Hassan bin Abi Hassan al-Yalimi, author of ‘Irshad al-Qulub’ in ‘I’lam al-Din fi sifat al-Muminin considered the confinement of infallibility to the Imams from Ahl al-Bayt as an evidence on the existence of the twelfth Imam the ‘authority’ son of Hassan.”(12)

Abdullah bin Nasr bin Khashshab al-Baghdadi in: ‘Tarikh Mawalid al-A’imah wa Wafayati him” argued in order to establish the existence and Imamate of the own who stands for the truth, the son of Hassan (the Mahdi), in accordance with the dictates of reason and valid argumentation, ... and the necessity of a text on anyone of this caliber or the appearance of a miracle in his right.... So also the non-existence of these attributes for anyone other than, him whose Imamate has been established by the companions of Hassan bin Ali, i.e. his son the Mahdi.” He said: “ This is a

principle that will not require, in the establishment of the Imamate, any other kind of tradition, as it stands on its own, before reason and its validity in establishing evidences.”

The Allama of Hillah, Hassan bin Yusuf al-Mutahar came later to establish, in the eleventh chapter—sub-chapter six--the existence of Imam Mahdi, by means of rational argument, made up of: the necessity of the Imamate, and the necessity of Imam being infallible, the necessity of a text on him or the appearance of a miracle on his hands. He then established the Imamate of Ali and his children through a famous tradition from the Prophet (peace be upon him). He says: “The twelfth Imam exists and is alive from the time of his birth in the year 256 A.H to the end of the time of responsibility, this is because, there must be an infallible Imam due to all the general evidences. Anyone other than him will not be infallible, so that he alone will be the Imam.”

Allama Muhammad Baqir Al-Majlisi set for the process of establishing the existence of Imam Mahdi by means of the principle of rational goodness and evil. He said in Bihar al-Anwar; “Reason rules that kindness is incumbent on Allah.... The existence of the Imam is kindness.... And that he has to be infallible, that infallibility cannot be seen except in him alone... There is a consensus among scholars (Ijma) on the fallibility of anyone other than the Sahib al-Zaman (Mahdi). So this establishes his existence.¹³

Sayyid Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr said in ‘Al-Shi’ah al-Imamiyyah’: “You know that the Ummah is in dire need of an infallible Imam... There is no doubt that need is not limited to some period only.... So necessity compels us to believe in the existence of Imam Mahdi... As no other Imam is claimed to be existing except him... This is a manifest fact.” (14)

Some theologians (Mutakallimin) depended on the principle: “The necessity of the existence of a son for the Imam, so that the Imamate will continue through him in his children. To prove the existence of a son for Imam Hassan Askari, Tusi reported from Imam Ali bin Musa Rida his saying:” The Sahib al-Amr (Imam) will never die till he sees his son after him”, so he nullified by that the statement of those who say. “There is no issue for Abu Muhammad Askari” (15)

B- TRADITIONAL STEPS ON THE RATIONAL WAY

It must be stated here, that: “The rational evidence on the existence of Imam Muhammad bin Hassan Askari is not a pure rational argument, in a way that each an every rational being (man) will automatically be able to grasp it. Rather, it depends upon several traditional premises. Sheikh Saduq said in ‘Ikmal al-Din’:” The claim of the occultation of the Sahib al-Zaman is based on the fact of the Imamate of his fore-fathers ... This is a legal matter... Not limited to reason alone.” (16)

Due to this, the theologians discussed all the sections of the Shiite rational evidence, like infallibility and the rest of contentious issues between them and the Muslim populace, and other Shiite sects, especially the Zaydites, and the Waqifites who believed in other theories of Mahdism, then being the most serious opponents of the Twelver- Imam Shiites in the period of perplexity.

Hence, the first stage of the traditional evidence in line with reason was the necessity of the existence of the Imam. Ali bin Babawaih al-Qummi has depended in his book 'Al-Imamah wa al-Tabsirah min al-Hayrah,' on a big number of traditions in order to establish this point. He reported from Imams Baqir and Sadiq, traditions indicating the impossibility of the world remaining without an Imam, or without a just ruler. The last person to die is the Imam, so that none can argue against Allah that the Hujjah (Imam) did not exist. (17)

Just as his son Sheikh Saduq reported in his 'Ikmal al-Din', from Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) that he said: "Allah is glorified and exalted that He will leave the world without justice (just Imam)". (18)

He added to this in 'Ilal al-Shara'i' another tradition on the necessity of the existence a living, renowned scholar in the world, to whom people will refer, as regards all legal and nonlegal matters. He reported from Abu Abdullah his statement: "If the world will be devoid of the Imam for the blink of an eye, it would have been sunk with its people." (19)

Tabari has also reported in 'Dala'il al-Imamah' from Abu Abdullah who said: " The world would never cease having a Hujjah (Imam) who knows the legal and the illegal matters, and who calls people to the path of Allah, the exalted." (20)

2- Establishing the Imamate in the household of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him)

The second step was in establishing the Imamate in the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), that is by depending on the prophetic tradition that says: " I leave behind me two great things among you, the Book of Allah, and my family and household. They will be successors after me. The two will not be separated till they come to my pond together." As the term 'Al-Itrah' is a general term, it includes all the relations of the Prophet (peace be upon him). In interpreting this tradition, according to Saduq, people have resorted to acquaintance of the Sirah (life history of the Prophet, which indicates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) referred to the scholars of his household excluding the ignorant, the pious and God- fearing among them, not the disobedient and the unjust. (21)

Tabari has reported in 'Dala'il al-Imamah', a tradition in interpreting Allah 's statement. " Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you." That it refers to the Imams from the children of Ali and Fatimah till the time of the Hour (of judgment). (22)

3- Establishing the Imamate of Amir al-Muminin (peace be upon him) and denying his being the Mahdi:

That is by confirming the texts pointing to his Caliphship and Imamate from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), and denying the belief in his being the Mahdi and his occultation-as the Sabaites claimed---based on his unambiguous and well known death and the rejection of esoteric explanations. (23)

- 4- Establishing Imamate in the children of Ali.
- 5- Denying the Imamate and Mahdism of Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah, so also denying the Imamate, Mahdism and occultation of Abu Hisham Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah, for whom the Kissanite Shiites claimed that, and establishing the Imamate of Ali bin Hussain. (24)
- 6- Denying the Imamate of the children of Hassan, some of who claimed the Imamate and Mahdism like Muhammad bin Abdullah (Dhu al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah), and confining the Imamate instead to the children of Hussain only. This is in line with the interpretation of Allah's statement: " and blood relation among each other have closer personal ties in the decree of Allah... " (25)
- 7- The impossibility of the Imamate being in two successive brothers after Hassan and Hussain, that is based on the interpretation of the verse: "And he made it a word, lasting among his offspring." On the basis that the word here means the Imamate,' the pronoun linked to the offspring refers to Hussain bin Ali, and the impossibility of the Imamate returning to a brother or cousin, but rather its transferred from the father to the son only. (26)

This rule has been adopted in order to deny the claim of Imamate made by Zayd bin Ali and his children, those who claimed Mahdism, or was claimed for them, and limiting the Imamate in Imam Muhammad Baqir and his son Ja'far Sadiq.

- 8- Establishing the Imamate of Sadiq and rejecting his Mahdism, contrary to the belief of Nawussite Shiites, those who denied the death of Sadiq and claimed his being the Mahdi and his occultation. (27).
- 9- Establishing the Imamate of Kadhim and rejecting his Mahdism, contrary to the belief of Isma'ilite Shiites, those who pursued their belief after Sadiq, in the offspring of Isma'il or the Fathites, who believed in the Imamate of Abdullah Al-Aftah; and especially the sect that believe in the existence of a concealed son for him beingcalled--Muhammad bin Abdullah Al-Aftah, who claimed Imamate and Mahdism. Ali bin Babawaih al-Qummi has reported a number of narrations on the Imamate of Kadhim, and the text on him from his father. He denied the Imamate of Abdullah al-Aftah and refuted the claims of Isma'il to the Imamate, for he died during the lifetime of Imam Sadiq, and that was so as to bring the Imamate to Kadhim and remove it from the children of Isma'il, who claim inheriting the Imamate, and also claim the emergence of Mahdi from their ranks. (28). His son Sheikh Saduq also reported several traditions on Imam Ali bin Musa Rida, which

stressed the death of his father and denied his being the Mahdi, which was upheld by the Waqifites, who rejected the admission that Kadhim has died. They rather claimed that he fled from the prison of Rashid and also claimed his occultation from sight, as a step towards his subsequent appearance in future. (29)

- 10- Establishing the Imamate of the remaining Imams like Rida, Jawwad, Hadi and Askari till it reached the twelfth Imam—Muhammad bin Hassan Askari.
- 11- Denying the Imamate and Mahdism of Muhammad bin Ali Hadi, which was supported by a section of the Imamate Shiites at that time. They were the Muhammadites, who rejected, like the Isma'ilites, admitting that he has died in the lifetime of his father. They insisted that he was alive and that he was in occultation; and that he was also the Mahdi; this was on the basis of his father's will for him. Sheikh Tusi in Al-Ghaybah depended in his efforts to invalidate this belief, on the apparent death of Sayyid Muhammad and considered denying it as denying what is not known necessarily. (30)
- 12- Establishing the Imamate of Hassan Askari and denying his being the Mahdi, as an important effort will have to be put forward in the way of establishing the Imamate and Mahdism of his son Muhammad. Sheikh Tusi did pause for long on this point in his al-Ghaybah. He presented a number of reports from Imam Hadi, establishing the Imamate and will for Askari. He reported a tradition that entails the occurrence of 'bada' (change of will) for Allah on the Imamate of Muhammad bin Ali, and its being given to his brother Hassan Askari. (31) Tusi adopted a number of miracles in the process of establishing the Imamate of Askari. Those Miracles were transmitted by Abu Hashim al-Ja'fari. They revolve around the knowledge of the Imam of the Unseen (al-Ghayb). (32) It was inevitable to establish the death of Imam Askari depending on what is clear and apparent, and denying his Mahdism and occultation, so also the interpretation of the traditions, which claim his coming to life after his death. This is in order to bar those who believe in the occultation of Imam Hassan and his Mahdism. (33)
- 13- Disproving the Imamate of Ja'far bin Ali Hadi. This process depends on disqualifying him from the Imamate; talkless of Mahdism, that is by suspecting him of drinking wine, disobedience and lying. (34) Sheikh Tusi depended, in discussing the Fathite Imamate Shiites, who believe in the Imamate of Ja'far bin Ali after the death of his brother Hassan Askari, based on the principle of vertical inheritance of the Imamate, and its continuation in the children and grand children till the day of Resurrection. It was not permissible to transfer it to the brothers or cousins. (35)
- 14- The necessity of the continuation of the Imamate till the day of Resurrection: It became mandatory to establish this principle, in the way of maintaining the existence of son of Hassan, as a refusal of the stand of the Imamate sect which believes in the cessation of the Imamate after the death of Imam Hassan Askari. Ali bin Babawaih al-Qummi has refuted the statement of such people by means of citing

a tradition from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) where he mentions the continuation of the Imamate in the members of his household (Ahl al-Bayt) till the day of Resurrection and its not being confined to a specific time-frame. (36) Sheikh Mufid depended on the impossibility of the world being devoid of an authority (al-Hujjah) i.e. from an infallible Imam, in the process of proving the rational existence of the Imam Sahib al-Zaman the awaited Mahdi. (37) Tusi reported a tradition from Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him): " If the world would remain even for one hour without an Imam, it would have sunk (perished)." (38) Al-Karajiki held unto the necessity of the continuation of the Imamate in the Ahl al-Bayt and the impermissibility of the world being devoid of an Imam after the death of Askari in his book 'Al-Burhan ala Sihhat Tul Umr Sahib al-Zaman', as a way of proving the necessity of arriving at the conclusion on the existence of Imam Sahib al-Zaman, and the disqualification of anyone other than him for the status of the Imamate. (39)

15-Disproving and denying the death of Mahdi

The last step in the process of establishing the existence of Imam Mahdi was denying his death, and interpreting the numerous traditions circulating among the people at that time. They also interpret those traditions discussing the death of the Qa'im, and his return to life after death. The advocates of the doctrine of Mahdism for Hassan Askari applied these traditions on him, while others employed them on his son. They said that he was born, then he died, he will live again and appear in the future. Some of these traditions were mentioned by Tusi in (Al-Ghaybah') he did not consider the traditions to be weak. He rather interpreted his death as the death (Lack) of remembrance and mention for him. He also pointed to the necessity of being cautious regarding them, and holding unto the well known. (40)

These are the various aspects of the rational evidence presented by the theologians (Mutakallimin), as the first and the most important evidence, on the existence of Muhammad bin Hassan Askari. This can be summarized as follows: Doctrine of divine Imamate for the Ahl al-Bayt, based on the belief in infallibility, divine text and vertical inheritance. This is essentially based on the principle of vertical inheritance and the impermissibility of having two brothers in the Imamate, contrary to the Fathite Imamate Shiites, who did not believe in this principle. They therefore, believe in the Imamate of Ja'far bin Ali, and did not agree with the Twelver- Imam Shiites in believing in the existence of a concealed son of Hassan Askari.

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31. al-Ghaybah, p, 121
32. ibid., pp. 122-124
33. Saduq,, op cit, pp. 40 and 133
34. ibid p. 320, Tusi : op, cit. pp. 133 and 136
35. Al- Ghaybah. p. 136
36. Al- Imamah wa al-Tabsirah, p. 233
37. Al-Fusul al- Mukhtarah, p. 402
38. Al- Ghaybah p. 132
39. ibid., p. 243
40. ibid., pp. 260, 161 and 282

CHAPTER TWO:

THE TRADITIONAL (TEXTUAL) EVIDENCE ON THE EXISTENCE OF THE MAHDI

The traditional evidence of the existence of the twelfth Imam Muhammad bin Hassan Askari depends on the Glorious Quran and the Hadiths of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and the traditions of the Imams from the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), which prophesied the coming of the awaited Mahdi. These texts are divided into a number of major classes:

FIRST GROUP: THE GLORIOUS QUR'AN

1. Allah's statement: " And We decreed for the children of Israel in the scripture: Indeed you would do mischief in the land twice and you will become tyrants and extremely arrogant. So, when the promise came for the first of the two, we sent against you slaves of Ours given to terrible warfare. They entered the very innermost parts of your homes. And it was a promise (completely) fulfilled. Then We gave you a return of victory over them": Kulayni has reported in the Al-Kafi from Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him): These verses were revealed concerning the Qa'im (Mahdi). (1)
2. Allah's saying: " So hasten towards all that is good. Wheresoever you may be, Allah will bring you together. " Kulayni has reported from Abu Ja'far (peace be upon him) that those addressed above are the companions of the Qa'im (Mahdi). (2)
3. Allah's saying: " Until it becomes manifest to them that this is the truth" Kulayni has reported also that it means the appearance of the Qa'im from Allah. (3)
4. Allah's statement: " And you shall certainly know the truth of it after a while. "
5. Allah's statement: "Then, when they perceived Our torment, behold, they (tried to) flee from it. Flee not but return to that wherein you lived a luxurious life and to your homes, in order that you may be questioned." Kulayni has reported from Abu Ja'far (peace be upon him) that he said: "When the Qa'im will appear and will be raised to the Umayyads in Syria, they will flee to Rome. When the companions of the Qa'im will descend on them, they will seek for safety and agreement, the companions of the Qa'im will say: "We will not guarantee that till you bring yourselves to us", and they bring themselves to them, that is Allah's saying: " Flee not but return to that wherein you lived a luxurious life." He further said: "He will then ask them about the treasures, While he knows best of them, and they will say: " Woe to us! Certainly we have been unjust. And that cry of

theirs ceased not, till we made them as a field that is reaped, extinct (dead) by means of the sword". (5)

6. The saying of Allah: " Till when they saw that which they are promised..." That is with the appearance of the Qa'im, as Ali bin Ibrahim al-Qummi says in his 'Tafseer'. (6)
7. Allah's statement: " The day when they will hear the shout in truth: that will be the day of coming out". That is the shout of the Qa'im from the heavens. (7)
8. Allah's saying: " That He makes it superior to religions, even though the idolaters hate it." What is meant here is the Mahdi from the children of Fatimah?
 - a. The statement of Allah: " Allah has promised those among you who believe and do righteous deeds that He will certainly grant them succession to (the present rulers) in the land."
9. Allah's saying: " And we wished to do a favor to those who were weak (and oppressed) in the land, and to make them Imams (Leaders) and to make them the inheritors."

All these verses are interpreted as referring to Mahdi, the Qa'im.

SECOND GROUP: HADITHS (TRADITIONS)

1.The reports on the Mahdi, the Qa'im of the time: " Have glad tidings for the Mahdi" so also " The Qa'im will not come, till a caller from heavens calls..." and " The world will not perish till a man from my household (Ahl al-Bayt), called the Mahdi rules this Ummah" and "The Mahdi is from the children of Fatimah." and "The Mahdi is from the children of Hussain..." These are numerous reports transmitted by Kulayni in al-Kafi, so also Nu'mani in 'Al-Ghaybah' and Saduq in 'Ikmal al-Din,' and Tusi in his 'Al-Ghaybah'. Only that many of those who wrote on the twelfth Imam, extract from them evidences on his existence and birth, that is with other narrations from Imams Jawwad and Hadi: That the Mahdi will be from their children. (8)

2.The reports on the occultation and the occult (Imam) like: " The Mahdi from my children will go into occultation and experience perplexity" and "Those who adhere to the belief in the Mahdi at the time of his occultation are indeed greater than the red matches?" (Al-Kibrit al-Ahmar) and " The Mahdi ... has to undergo occultation, and experience (perplexity) that mislead people away from their religions" and " The Qa'im from among us has a long occultation", and " The owner of the affairs has to (experience) seclusion and occultation." And "The Qa'im has to (experience) occultation before his (final) appearance", and " The owner of this affair will

experience two occultations, one will be long to the extent that some of them will say he died, and some of them will say, he has been killed, and some of them will say he has gone. No one will remain on his affair among his companions save a few people.”

Those who believe in the existence of the twelfth Imam-Muhammad bin Hassan Askari have taken those traditions as evidence on the validity of their theory: Muhammad bin Abi Zaynab has said in Al-Ghaybah, “Even if no other tradition has been reported on occultation except this tradition (the last one), it would be enough for anyone who reflects on it.” (9)

Muhammad bin Ali bin Babawaih Saduq considered the Shiites’ transmission of these reports that discuss ‘occultation before it happened’, as evidence on its validity. (10) He said: “ The non-appearance of any text and successor after Hassan Askari, and the occultation of Imam Mahdi and his concealment, and the conflict among Shiites, and the perplexity on his affair, as mentioned in the previous reports, all these serve as evidence on the existence and the occultation of the Mahdi”. (11)

Sheikh Tusi said in ‘al-Ghaybah’: “ The core of the evidence from these reports is what it contains of foretelling something before it happens. That validates and confirms what we believed as regards the Imamate of Hassan’s son, because of the fact that the knowledge of what happens in the future is known only to the Knower of all Unseen. So even if only one report narrated, conforms to what has been predicted, that would have sufficed. “ (12)

He added: “ What proves the Imamate of the son of Hassan and the validity of his occultation, is the well-known and wide spread reports from his fore-fathers much long before his time, telling that the owner of the affair (Mahdi) will experience an occultation, the nature of that occultation, and evolves of differences concerning it and other happenings related to it. And that he will experience two occultations, one being longer than the other. And that in the first one, his affairs will be known, unlike in the second, when nothing will be known of him.... That exactly conforms to what the reports contain. If not because of the validity of such reports and the validity of his Imamate that would not conform to it. Such will not happen except through a revelation from Allah, the Exalted on the tongue of His Prophet (peace be upon him).” (13)

3- Reports on the Twelve Imams: Like the Hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him), “There will be twelve caliphs after me” or “The affair of my Ummah will never cease being dominant till the appearance of twelve Imams. All of them being from Quraish.” or “Twelve Imams (Leaders) will lead this Ummah... All of them will be from Quraish, nothing will be like it.” or ‘Twelve princes will be after, me, all of them from Quraish’. All these reports are from Sunni collections. Saduq has reported them and he commented on them thus. “ Our opponents from the scholars of Hadith have reported overwhelmingly from the Hadith of Jabir bin Samrah al-Sawa’i from the Messenger of Allah.... I have studied and investigated the chains of narrations of these Hadiths, ...Which shows that the reports in the hands of the Imamate Shiites from the Prophet (peace be

upon him) and the Imams, on the twelve Imams, were sound reports.” (14) Just as Kulayni reported them in ‘Al-Kafi’. (15) And Tusi has also reported them in ‘al-Ghaybah’ (16).

As for the Shiite reports on the issue of twelve Imams, Kulayni has mentioned in ‘Al-Kafi’ seventeen traditions on that. Saduq also has mentioned in ‘Ikmal al-Din’ about little over thirty reports in that regard... Al-Khazzaz has also reported in his ‘Kifayat al-Athar fi al-Nass ala al-A’imah al-Ithna ‘Ashar’ about (200) two hundred reports. He said regarding them: “They have the level of consensus due to ‘the impossibility of the companions of the Messenger of Allah and the chosen of his household and followers of the companions through whom these reports were reported, agreeing on falsehood.” (17)

The doctrine of the twelve Imams according to the Shiite report which mentions the names of twelve Imams in a pre-determined list before that time depends on the book of Salim bin Qays al-Hilali, that says: ‘The Shiites were keeping and preserving the list of the twelve Imams for the period of three centuries’.

Ibn Abi Zaynab al-Nu’mani has said regarding the book of Salim: “There is no conflict among the entire Shiites who were learned and who transmitted (Shiite learning) from the Imams, that the book of Salim bin Qays al-Hilali, is one of the fundamental and oldest source books reported by scholars and transmitters of the traditions of Ahl al-Bayt. It was one of the most important reference books the Shiites refer to and depend on”. (18)

Saduq and the rest of the theologians regarded those reports considered as popular, as evidence on the existence and the birth of the twelfth Imam Muhammad bin Hassan Askari, so as to complete the ‘twelve’ foretold before. Without him, the number will be (11) eleven Imams only, contrary to the traditions. So also due to the fact that, the narrations mentioned that the Mahdi will be from among the Ahl al-Bayt, and will be of the children of Hussain. The eleven Imams have gone, and the Mahdi was not among them. It therefore becomes inevitable that he was the Mahdi that will appear and fill the world with justice as it was filled with injustice and tyranny”. (19)

Tusi considered the consensus of the two different groups the general Muslims and the Shiites that the Imams will be twelve in number, after the Prophet (peace be upon him) no more, no less. He considered that as evidence on the birth of the Mahdi (Sahib al- Zaman) and the validity of his occultation. He said: ‘The Shiites report these traditions contentiously from generation to generation’. (20)

4- The Mahdi – The Twelfth Imam In addition to the above, we find in the Shiite heritage more than seventy narrations from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and the member of his household (peace be upon them) mentioning the Mahdi and the Qa’im in clear terms: That he is the twelfth Imam and the ninth of the children of Hussain. Some of the narrations mention him by his complete name, while some only pointed to his nicknames and ‘kunya’. Of those narrations, Saduq mentions in ‘Ikmal al-Din’ from the Messenger of Allah that he said: “My successors (Khulafa) and (the Inheritors of) the will and the evidences (hujaj) of Allah after me will be twelve in

number, the first of them is my brother and the last of them will be my son, the Mahdi....” (21)

He also reported from him: “ Allah, the Exalted has chosen from Ali, Hassan and Hussain, and has chosen from Hussain the inheritors of the will from his children ... the ninth of them is their Qa’im.” (22)

And from Amir al-Muminin (Ali), (peace be upon him): “ I pondered on a child in my loins the eleventh of my children. He is the Mahdi.” (23)

From Hussain bin Ali (peace be upon him), “The ninth of my children.... will be our Qa’im, we the Ahl al-Bayt, Allah will prepare and accomplish his affair in one night”. (24)

From Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him): “ The sixth of my children will experience occultation and he will be the twelfth of the Imams of guidance after the Messenger of Allah, the first of them was Amir al-Muminin, and the last will be ‘Baqiyyat al- Lah’ on earth and the ‘Sahib al- Zaman’. (25)

And from Imam Rida (peace be upon him) “ The Qa’im will be ... the fourth of my children.” (26)

From him also: “ The Imam after me is Muhammad my son and after him, his son Ali and after Ali, his son Hassan, and after Hassan his son ‘Al-‘Hujjah’ the Awaited Qa’im’. (27)

From Imam Hadi (peace be upon him). “ The Imam after me will be Hassan my son, and after Hassan, his son the Qa’im (Mahdi)”. (28)

Abu Abdullah reported from Jabir bin Abdullah al-Ansari who said that he went to Fatimah al- Zahra, in the lifetime of the Messenger of Allah, so as to congratulate her on the birth of Hussain, he saw in her hand a green board, and he saw on that board some writing as bright as sun-light. He then asked her about it and she replied him. “ This board was bestowed by Allah to the Messenger of Allah, on it is the name of my father, and the name of Ali and the names of the (owners) of the will from my children, and my father gave it to me to please me on that... and on it were the names of the twelve Imams, one after the other.... The last of them (M H M D). Will be raised by Allah as a mercy for all the world.” (29)

5- The Indispensability of the Existence of the Hujjah (Mahdi) on Earth: There were other traditions that emphasize the necessity of the ‘Hujjah’ (evidence) on earth and the impossibility of the world being devoid of Imam, like what was reported from the Messenger of Allah in the books of the Sunnis: “ Anyone who dies without (allegiance to) the Imam, has died, the death of Jaliliyyah (similar to the death in the period of ignorance—before Islam), and anyone who withdrew his obedience (revolted) will come on the day of Judgment without ‘Hujjah’ (evidence)”. And from Imam Sadiq: “ Anyone who dies without knowing his Imam (leader) has died similar to the death of pre-Islamic Jahili period,” as reported by Salim bin Qays in his book,

and Saduq in his (Ikmal al –Din) p. 413), so also Kulayni in (Al-Kafi, vol.1.p, 376), Nu'mani in (Al-Ghaybah, p, 129) and Mufid in (Al-Ikhtisas, p. 268) and (Al-Rasa'il, p. 384).

The other tradition being reported by him from Imam Sadiq: "The world will never be devoid of the man who knows the truth, if people increase in that, he says, they have increased, and if they decreased, he says, they have decreased. When they come with it, he believes them. If not because of that, the truth can never be known from falsehood". : Baqir in (Al-Mahasin P. 235), Saduq in ('Ilal al-Shara'i, vol. 1 p. 200, and Mufid in (Al-'Ikhtisas, p.289) have all reported it.

Likewise, what was reported from Imam Sadiq that: " Allah is so exalted that He will not leave the world without an (Imam), as was reported by Saffar in (Basa'ir al- Darajat p. 485), Kulayni in (Al-Kafi, vol 1 p. 178) and Saduq in (' Ikmal –al-Din, p. 229).

In the same way, he was reported to have said: ' Allah has never abandoned the world since the creation of Adam (peace be upon him) without an Imam to be followed, in line with Allah's guidance. He is the evidence on the servants (of Allah). Anyone who abandons him will stray, and he who sticks to him will be saved, as a duty on Allah, the Exalted. " (30)

Another narration from Imam Sadiq puts it that he said, "If the world will be devoid of the evidence (Mahdi) even for the blink of an eye, it would have swallowed its people." Saffar reported this in (Basa'ir al-Darajat, p. 481) Kulayni also in (Al-Kafi vol. 1. p, 179), Nu'mani in (Al-Ghaybah p. 139) and Saduq in ('Ilal al-Shara'i, p. 197) and (Ikmal al- Din, p. 201).

Therefore the traditional given evidence comprises of a number of spheres, like Qur'anic verses and traditions that mention the Qa'im and the Mahdi in the general sense, and limited that to the Ahl al- Bayt and to the children of Imam Ali (peace be upon him). This is in addition to the narrations that mention the number of twelve Imams, so also the birth of Imam Mahdi and his name. This will lead to the belief in the birth and existence of the twelfth Imam, Al-Hujjah, the son of Hassan Askari, and the continuation of his life: despite the fact that he has never appeared in the life of his father nor was there any will for him, or a direct pointer from him to it.

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- 3- ibid, p. 312
- 4- ibid, pp. 239-240
- 5- ibid, p. 44

- 6- ibid. Vol. 2, p. 390
- 7- ibid. Vol. 2, p. 327
- 8- Sadiq: Ikmal al- Din, p. 378, al-Khazzaz: Kifayat al- Athar, p. 277
- 9- ibid. p. 116
- 10- Ikmal al- Din, p. 19
- 11- ibid. P.113
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- 21- P. 280
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- 29- Ikmal al-Din. P 305, Al- Kafi of Kulayni: vol. 1, p. 527

CHAPTER THREE:

THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

A-THE BIRTH OF THE MAHDI

The historical evidence admits that what is apparent as regards the life of Imam Askari, and his life history, demise and his having a son. It asserts: The political circumstances were such that could not allow Hassan Askari to declare the existence of a son for him, and the fear from the Abbasid authorities who believed earlier that he was the Mahdi, that will overthrow their rule, all these force the Imam to keep secret the issue of the birth of his son (the Awaited Mahdi). The evidence further mentions the details of the birth of Muhammad bin Hassan Askari and the circumstances surrounding it; so also the stories of those who witnessed it and met the Mahdi in the different stages of his life, during the life of his father and after him.

THE MOTHER OF THE MAHDI

Reports have not agreed on the name of the mother of Mahdi. While Sheikh al- Aqdam Ibn Abi al- Thalji al- Baghdadi in ‘ Tarikh al-A’imah’, and Masudi in ‘Ithbat al- Wasiyyah’ and Tusi in ‘ Al- Ghaybah’, and Majlisi in ‘ Bihar al- Anwar’ declare that her name was ‘ Narjis’. Muhammad bin Ali Saduq in ‘Ikmal al-Din’ says that her name was ‘ Malikah’, the daughter of Yashu’, bin Qaysar, the king of Rome at that time. And that she saw Imam Hassan Askari in her dream and she loved him and married him. She fled from her father who wanted to give her hand in marriage to his nephew. She was captured, and Imam Hadi sent a coppersmith to buy her from the slave market in Baghdad. (1)

Mas’udi on the other hand says: She was a slave girl born in the house of one of the sisters of Abu Hassan Ali bin Muhammad. She brought her up in her house. When she grew up and her structure was complete, Abu Muhammad came to her and admired her and then sought from her uncle to seek the permission of her father that she would go to him, and she did. (2)

Saduq said in another narration that: The name of the mother of the Mahdi was Saqil and that she died during the life of Hassan Askari. (3)

There were several other names mentioned by Majlisi like ‘ Susan’ and ‘ Rayhanah’ and ‘ Khamt’. It was transmitted from Al- Shahid al- Awwal in ‘al- Durus’ that she was a free woman and that her name was ‘Maryam bint Zayd al- Alawiyyah’. (4)

THE DATE OF HIS BIRTH

The reports are not in agreement on the date of the birth of Imam Muhammad bin Hassan Askari. Some of the early Shiites accepted the claim of the slave girl ‘Narjis’ of being pregnant, after the death of Imam Askari. They said she gave birth to the Mahdi after eight month of the claim. (5)

Sheikh Mufid said in ‘ Risalah Maulid al- A’imah’ that he was born on the 8th of Dhu al- Qi’ dah, 207 or 208 A.H. He also added: “At the time of the death of his father, he was two years and four month of age”. He says in ‘Al- Fusul al-Mukhtarah’: He was born in the middle of Sha’ban, 255 A.H (6). He says in another narration: He was born in the year 252 A.H and his age at the time of the death of his father was eight years. (7)

Sheikh Saduq, however, said in ‘Ikmal al- Din’: His birth was on 8th Sha’ban 256 A. H. (8)

Sheikh Tusi on his part says in ‘Al- Ghaybah’ that: He was born in the middle of Ramadan. (9) without specifying the year. In another report he agrees with Sheikh Mufid that he was born in the middle of Sha’ban 255 A. H. (10)

It was normal for these reports to contradict each other in specifying the date of the birth of a person said to have been delivered in a secret manner, and whose affairs remained hidden.

THE WAY OF HIS DELIVERY

All of Saduq, Tusi, Mas’udi and Khusaibi reported the story of the delivery of Imam Mahdi depending on one report attributed to ‘Hakimah’ the aunt of Imam Askari. She said in that report.

“Abu Muhammad Hassan bin Ali has sent to me saying: “O Aunty take your iftar (Breaking the fast) for this evening with me, as it is the night of mid-Sha’ban and Allah the Exalted will make manifest His evidence this night.” I said, I said to him: “Who will be his mother ?” He said to me: “From Narjis.” I then said to him “ May I be ransom for you, there are no signs on her.” He then said: “ It will be just as I said to you.”

She said: I then came to him. When I greeted (him) and sat down, she came removing my Khuff and said to me: “O my mistress and the mistress of my family, good evening”. I said to her, “You are rather, my mistress and the mistress of my family”. She said: She denied my statement and said: “ What is this, O Aunty?” I then said to her: “O

my daughter, Allah will bestow you in this night a son and a leader (Master) in this world and in the hereafter.”

She said she became shy. After I have finished my ‘Isha (Night) prayer, I broke my fast and then lied down and slept. In the late part of the night I woke up for prayer... when I finished my prayer, she was still sleeping with no any sign on her. I sat down observing. Then I lied down. I then woke up again and she was still asleep. Then she woke up and prayed and then slept.

Hakimah then added: I then went out trying to confirm the appearance of the twilight of dawn. I saw the first twilight like the tail of a wolf, and she was still sleeping. I doubted (the affair). Then Abu Muhammad (peace be upon him) shouted from his seat saying: “Don’t be in a haste O Aunty, the affair is nigh”.

She said: While I was in that state I became aware immediately, and rose up to her, I said: “May Allah’s name be with you”. Then I said to her: “Do you feel anything?” She said: “ yes O Aunty. I then said to her: Put yourself together and hold your heart, it is as I told you.”

She then said: She took hold of me for some time; I then felt my master’s presence. I remove the dress Alas, He was prostrating coming to the world in prostrating position. I then put him close to myself, and I found him clean and cleansing. Then Abu Muhammad shouted to me, “Bring to me my son, O Aunty!” I brought him to him, and he placed his hand under his buttocks and his back, and put his feet on his chest, and then put his tongue in his mouth. He also passed his hand over his eyes, his ears and his joints. Then he said: “Speak, my son!” He said: “I testify that there is no god except Allah alone with no associate, and I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah”, he then praised Ali, Amir al-Muminin, and the Imams till he reached his father then he stopped. Then Abu Muhammad said: “O Aunty take him to his mother, so that he will say salam to her, and then bring him back to me”. I took him to her and he said Salam to her, and she responded. I then brought him to the seat (of the Imam). He (the Imam) then said: O Aunty, you come to us on the seventh day.”

Hakimah said: “The following day I came to say salam to Abu Muhammad, and I removed the curtain to look closely to my master but I did not see him. I then said: “ May I be your ransom, what happen to my master?” He said: “ O aunty we have given him to the custody of the one to whom the mother of Musa gave the custody (of her son)”.

Hakimah said: “ On the seventh day I came, greeted (the people) and then sat down. He then said: “Bring me my son”. I then brought my master to him, in a piece of cloth. He did with him as did the first time, and he put his tongue in his mouth, as if he was providing him nourishment of milk or honey. Then he said: “ Speak my son!” He said: “I testify that there is no god except Allah and then said salat (blessings) on Muhammad (peace be upon him), and on Amir al- Muminin and the pious Imams till he stops on (the name) of his father. Then he recited the following verse: “ In the name of Allah, the Most gracious, the Most Merciful. And we wished to do a favor to those who were weak (and oppressed) in the land, and to make them rulers and to make them the inheritors. And to establish them in the land and we let Pharaoh and Haman and their hosts receive from them that which they feared.” (11)

Hakimah says in another report mentioned by Saduq: Narjis was not having any signs of pregnancy on her, and she was not aware of that. When Hakimah said to her that she will give birth that same night, she was surprised and then said: “ My mistress I don’t see anything of that.” (12) Till at the end part of the night, at the time of the break of dawn, she rose frightened and then said: “ The affair has appeared to me, has my master told you?” The report said that: Hakimah came reciting the Qur'an on Narjis, and the child from the womb responded reciting as she was reciting and he said salam to her, which increased her fear. The report however, said that Narjis was concealed from the sight of Hakimah, as if a veil was put between her and Narjis. This increased her astonishment. She cried and took refuge with Abu Muhammad, who then said to her: “Go back, O Aunty, and you will find her in her place”.

Hakimah said: I then returned.. It was not long that the veil was removed, and she appeared before me. She was covered with signs of light, which my eyes cannot withstand, and the child before her was on his face in prostrating position. (13)

This report also adds another issue i.e. the flying of a number of birds over the head of the child, and that Hassan talked to one of them saying: “Take him and protect him, and bring him to us after every forty days”. This made the bird to take him and fly away with him, leaving his mother weeping due to the separation.

Hakimah said: I said: “Which bird is that?” He replied: “ This is the Holy Spirit attached to the Imams, helping them attaining success, and guiding and educating them. After forty days the child was brought back and he has started walking on his feet, as if he was two years of age, which made her to inquire surprisingly. Her brother Hassan said: “The children of the Prophets (peace be upon them), and the inheritors of the will, if they are Imams, they grow up differently from the way others grow up. A child among us, if he lives for one month it will be as if he has lived for one year. A child among us can speak in his mother’s womb, and can recite the Qur'an and worship his Lord, the Most High. At the time of suckling, the angels used to give him feeding. They descended in the morning and in the evening on him.

The report from Hakimah continues, with her stating that she never cease seeing that child, every forty days, till the time he became an adult and few days before the passing away of Abu Muhammad, but she did not recognize him. She said to her nephew: “ Who is this that you commanded me to sit before him?” He said to her: “This is the son of Narjis, and he is my successor after me. After little time I will go, listen to him and obey him.

Hakimah further said: “ After few days, Abu Muhammad passed away and the people became divided as you saw. By Allah I used to see him morning and evening, and he used to inform me of what you are asking, and I then tell you of that. By Allah I intend to ask him of something, and he will tell me of it before I ask him. And an affair may come to my mind, and a reply to that will come to me from him at that moment, without me asking him...” (14)

TUSI'S REPORT OF THE STORY OF MAHDI'S BIRTH

Tusi reports in his Al-Ghaybah the story of the delivery of the Mahdi, but he never mentions the story of the birds, the Holy Spirit or the taking of the child (Mahdi). He rather says that: 'Hakimah bade farewell to Abu Muhammad and went away to her house after the birth of the Mahdi. At the time she longed for him the Mahdi after three days, she returned and searched for him in his room, but could not find any traces of him, and did not hear any mention of him, she did not like inquiring. She then went to Abu Muhammad and he talked to her first, saying: "He is O Aunty in the canopy of Allah, He has concealed him till the time He wished. When Allah will take me away and I am dead and you saw my followers divided, tell the reliable among them. Let him be covered for you, and concealed for them. Because the friend of Allah will be taken away by Him from His creation, and veil him from His servants. No one will see him, till the time when Jibril (peace be upon him) will present to him his horse, 'that Allah might accomplish a matter already ordained.'" (15)

Tusi adds in another report a statement of Hassan to his aunt: "We have given him to the custody of the one to whom the mother of Musa has given the custody (of her child)". What was requested from her was to come on the seventh day, when the Mahdi will return and Hakimah will be able to see him. (16)

He says in a third report: That Hakimah went back after three (3) days, and she saw the Mahdi in the cradle and a green piece of cloth was on his body. He was sleeping on the back of his head (facing the heavens), uncovered and untied. He opened his eyes and started laughing to her, and calling her with his finger. He then disappeared after that. (17)

He says in a fourth report that: Hakimah found written on the arm of the Mahdi at the time of his birth "The truth has come and falsehood has vanished, surely falsehood is ever bound to vanish", as she also saw that he was circumcised, and a sort of veil was put between her and the father of the Mahdi on the one hand, and the Mahdi himself, and she could not see anyone. She then said: "Where is my master?" Hassan replied her: "The one with more right (on him) than you and us has taken him". When she returned after forty days she found the Mahdi walking on his feet in the house. She has never seen a face as beautiful as his, nor speech as eloquent as his. When she was amazed by all that and said. "I saw of his affair what I saw while he was only forty days old." Abu Muhammad smiled and said: "O my aunt don't you know that we the Imams grow in a day like the growth of all others in one year. " She stood up and went away, and she never saw him after that. (18)

Tusi reports from the two housemaids of Imam Askari (Nasim and Mariyah) that they said: "When Sahib al-Zaman (Mahdi) appeared from the womb of his mother he fell down on his knees, raising his second finger to the heavens, and then he sneezed and said. "All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon Muhammad and his family? I am submitting (myself) to Allah, not being proud or arrogant. He then added," The oppressors thought that the evidence of Allah (Hujjah) has been obliterated. If He has allowed us to speak, the doubts would have been dispelled. (19)

Mas'udi as well as Khusaibi added another aspect to the story of the birth of the Mahdi saying: "The Mahdi was born from the thigh of his mother" And they reported from Imam Askari, his statement to his aunt Hakimah: "The Imams were not carried in the wombs, but were carried in the sides." (20)

Mas'udi agreed with Saduq and Tusi in that Hakimah slept at those moments, while sitting down as she was overpowered by sleep, and was awoken only by the cry of the child from Narjis, and the voice of his father calling her: "O my aunt bring my son!" He also said: The Mahdi went into hiding on that day, and returned after one week. Hakimah saw him then, for the second time and then he went into hiding, and she did not see him again, till after forty (40) days when she saw him walking (on his feet). (21)

Mas'udi however disagreed with Saduq who mentioned in his report that: "The Imam grows in a month like the growth of others in one year." He also disagreed with Tusi who said that, "The Imam develops in one day like the development of others in one year". Mas'udi did not value much those to whom (such reports) were attributed. He reports the statement of Askari to Hakimah, "Didn't you know, O Aunty that we, the inheritors of the will, grow in a day like the growth of others in a week? And we develop in one week like the development of others in one year?"(22)

Finally Mas'udi also reports from Abu Muhammad Askari, who said: "When the Sahib (Mahdi) was born Allah sent two angels which took him to the canopy of al-Arsh (The Throne), till he stood before Allah and He said to him. "Welcome, for your sake I will give, forgive and punish." (23)

THE SECRECY OF THE DELIVERY

Despite the fact that the above report of Hakimah has indicated that the birth remained a conceal secret, and that Imam Hassan requested her to mention it when divisions appear, and only to the (reliable) leaders, Saduq mentions in 'Ikmal al-Din' that Imam Hassan Askari has informed the leading figure of the Shiites in Qum, Ahmad bin Ishaq, and that he wrote to him. 'That a child has been delivered for me let him be a secret for you and concealed for the rest of the people. For we would not tell anyone about him, except very close relations, and those who will give their loyalty to him. I had loved to inform you so that you will be pleased with that, as we are pleased. Salam'. (24)

In another report Saduq says that: Ahmad bin Ishaq went to Imam Askari one day and asked him about the Imam and Caliph after him. He got up hastily and entered the house and then came out with a child of 3 years of age on his shoulder, and then said to him: "O Ahmad, if not because of your position (virtue) with Allah, the Most High and with Allah's evidences (Imams), I would not have presented this my son to you." (25)

Al-Fadl bin Shadhan says in 'Kashf al-Haq' that Hassan said: "The friend of Allah and His evidence on His creation and my successor (caliph) after me, was born in

the night of the middle of Sha'aban, and the first to wash him was Ridwan, the custodian of paradise, then Hakimah."

Saduq says that: "Of those who knew of the news of the birth was Abu al-Fadl Hassan bin Hussain Al-Alawi, who used to say that he went to Abu Muhammad at 'Surr Man Ra'a' and congratulated him on the birth of his child. Abu Harun was with them also and he said that he saw Sahib al-Zaman and removed his dress and he found him circumcised. (26)

Tusi emphasized these two reports in 'Al-Ghaybah'. (27) Sheikh Mufid says that Hassan Askari used to present him (the Mahdi) to some individuals when they visited him like Amr al-Ahwazi. (27) In another narration: Imam Askari sent money to some Shiites and instructed them to slaughter the Aqiqah for his son. (29)

SIGHTING THE MAHDI DURING THE LIFE- TIME OF HIS FATHER

Anyhow the Shiites historians have transmitted a number of stories on sighting the twelfth Imam Muhammad bin Hassan Askari during the lifetime of his father, and at the time of his death. For Kulayni, Saduq and Tusi have reported that a man from the people of Persia who was serving in the house of Imam Askari told that, he one day saw a housemaid carrying a white child, and the statement of the Imam to him, that: "This is your companion (Imam)." And that he never saw him after that. (30)

Saduq and Tusi also transmitted from a group of the companions of Imam Askari, among them was Uthman bin Said al-Umari that he presented to them his son and said to them: "This is your Imam after me and my successor (caliph) on you. Obey him and be not divided after me in your religion, lest you perish. However, you will not see him after this day." They said: We came out from him, and after few days, Abu Muhammad (Askari) passed away. (31)

Likewise Saduq reported in 'Ikmal al- Din' stories of a man called Yaqub bin Manqush that one day he went to Imam Askari and asked him: "Who is the owner of this affair?" He lifted the curtain of the house, and a child of five years of age came out and sat on the thigh of Abu Muhammad. He said to Yaqub "This is your companion." Then he said to the child: "O my son, enter till the appointed time." He went inside the house and hid himself.

It was reported from Nasim, the housemaid of Imam Askari that she went to the 'Owner of the affair' (Mahdi) one night after his birth, she sneezed in front of him and he replied her saying: "Yarhamuki Allah (May Allah have mercy on you)."

It was narrated of another servant called Tarif Abu Nasr that he went to the Sahib al-Zaman, and he requested from him to bring him red sandals, and then added: "I

am the last of the inheritors of the will and through me Allah will repulse calamity on my family and followers.”

It was reported from a Syrian man called Abdullah that he went to the garden of Banu Amir, and he saw a young man sitting on a prayer rug, putting the side of his dress in his mouth. He asked: “Who was that?” And it was said to him: “(MHMD) son of Hassan”. (32)

Saduq has reported a long narration from Sa’ad bin Abdullah al-Qummi: That he went together with Ahmad bin Ishaq to Imam Askari and he saw a child on his thigh, holding and playing with golden pomegranate. Hassan was holding a pen. Whenever he wants to write with it, the child used to hold his hand, and put the pomegranate in front of him. So he gives it back to him, so as not to prevent him from writing what he wanted. Ahmad bin Ishaq had with him a bag, in it were some gifts from the Shiites and the servants to the Imam, so he placed it before him. He said to the child: “Unseal it.” He refused and said: “Is it permissible for me to take with my pure hands, impure gifts and wealth, its pure has been mixed with the impure?” Ahmad bin Ishaq took the bag to separate the two. The child explained the story of the wealth and gifts one by one...(33)

In another narration reported also by Saduq from Ahmad bin Ishaq, he says that he asked the Imam on the successor (caliph) after him, and that he brought his son and presented him to him. But he was not satisfied, therefore he asked him: “O my master is there any sign that will satisfy my heart?” The child spoke in a very eloquent Arabic and said: “I am the Baqiyyah of Allah on His earth, the one to avenge his enemies. Don’t look for a sign after the eye (what you have seen).” Imam Askari then said, “This is one of the secrets of Allah. Take what I gave you, conceal his (story) and be of the thankful”. (34)

Tusi reports in his ‘Al-Ghaybah’ from Kamil bin Ibrahim al- Madani that he went to Imam Askari to ask him on some issues. As he was sitting in the house, the wind took the lowered curtain of the door, and behold there was a young man as bright as the moon. He said to him: “O Kamil bin Ibrahim you have come to the friend of Allah, His evidence and His door, asking him such and such? He replied: “Yes, by Allah!” Then the curtain rolled back to its position. He could not remove it and did not see him after that”. (35)

It was reported also from Isma’il bin Ali Nubakhti that he went to Imam Askari one hour before his death. He demanded from his servant ‘Aqid’ to go inside the house and bring out the child. Abu Muhammad said to him “Have glad tidings my son, for you are the ‘Sahib al-Zaman’, the Mahdi, the evidence of Allah on His earth. You are my son the inheritor of my will, I gave birth to you. You are Muhammad bin Hassan. You are the seal of the pure Imams. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has foretold about you, and has nicknamed you so. My father has given this covenant to me from your pure forefathers. (36)

SIGHTING HIM AT THE TIME OF THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER

Of all the early historians, it was only Muhammad bin Ali Saduq who mentioned other stories like the story of Abu al-Adyan al-Basri who said:

‘I was serving Hassan Bin Ali, carrying his letters to the cities. One day I went to him during his illness that led to his death. He wrote some letters, and said: “ Go with it to the cities, for you will be away for fifteen days and you will go to Surr Man Raa on the 15th day. And you will hear the wailer in my house, and you find me where people are washed (after my death).

I said to him: “O master if that happens, then who?”

He replied: “Any one who demands from you the reply of my letters he will be the Qa’im after me.”

I said to him: “ Tell me more!”

He said: “Anyone who prays for me, he will be the Qa’im after me.”

I said: “ Tell me more!”

He said: “ Anyone who tells of what is in ‘al-Hamyan’(a kind of bag) he will be the Qa’im after me.”

I left him, with the letters in my hands, to the cities, and received the replies to them, and then I proceeded to Surr Man Raa on the fifteenth day, as he said. Behold! I heard the wailer in his house, and he was at the washing place. And behold Ja’far bin Ali his brother, was at the door of the house and the Shiites were surrounding him, saying their condolences and congratulating him. I said to myself, if this will become the Imam, then the Imamate is invalidated, for I know him drinking ‘Nabidh’ (a kind of wine), and he gambles in al-Jawsaq and he plays with Tamborine. I went forward, gave my condolence (to him), congratulated (him) and then sat down. He did not ask me about anything. Aqid then came out and said: “O master your brother has been shrouded come and pray on him.” Ja’far bin Ali went in together with the Shiites around him, with Al-Samman (Uthman bin Sa’id al-Umari) at the forefront. When we entered the house behold, Hassan was on the carrier in his shroud. Ja’far then went forward to pray on him. As he was about to say the takbir (start the prayer), a child- of some brownish face, with some curls on his hair, and an opening in his incisors- came out pulling the dress of Ja’far and said “ Go back my uncle, I have more right of praying on my father.” Ja’far went back. His face showed sign of fury. The child went forward and prayed on him, and (Hassan) was buried near the grave of his father. He (the child) then said: “O Basri! Bring the replies of the letters that were with you.” I gave them to him. I said to myself: ‘ These are two evidences, al-Hamyan remains.’ Then I went to Ja’far who was sighing. And the gatekeeper said to him: “O master! Who was that child, so that we establish our evidence against him.” He replied “By Allah! I have never seen him before, and I do not know him.” We were sitting down when a group of people from Qum arrived, and asked of Hassan bin Ali. They were told of his death. They then said, “To whom should we give condolence?” Some pointed to Ja’far. They said salam to him, and gave their condolences

and congratulated him. They then said: “ We have with us letters and wealth, will you tell us from whom were the letters.” He stood up dusting his clothes, and said: “You want us to know the Unseen?” He said: The servant came out and said: “ With you were the letters of so and so and so and so and the Hamyan has 1000 (one thousand) and ten dinars inside it. They then gave him the letters and the money. They said: “ The one who directed you to take that us, is the Imam.” (37)

Saduq narrates this story in another way from Sinan al-Mausili. He stated that when Askari died, delegations from the mountains and from Qum came with money. They were not aware of the death of Hassan. They asked about his heir, and it was said to them: It is his brother Ja'far; he has gone for entertainment with some dancers in the dark. They wanted to go back but Abu Abbas Muhammad bin Ja'far al-Himyari al-Qummi said to them: “Stay with us till this man comes and we will test him on the veracity of his claim. They demanded from him to talk on the Unseen (al-Ghayb) as regards the details of the money and their owners. He denied having the knowledge of the Unseen.

At the time they were leaving the city a servant came calling: “ O so and so, respond to your master”. They said, we went with him till we entered the house of our master Hassan bin Ali, behold his son, the Qa'im our leader, was sitting on a bed, like the brightness of the moon wearing a green dress. We said ‘Salam’ to him and he responded, and then he said: “The total amount of money was so and so. So and so carries such amount, and so and so carries such amount”.

He kept on explaining till he described the whole amount. He also described our means of transportation, our clothes and the animals with us. We fell down prostrating to Allah the Most High, as a sigh of gratitude for what he has informed us, and we asked him what we wanted and he replied. We delivered the money to him. He ordered us not to bring money to Surr Man Raa after that, and that he will appoint a man in Baghdad for us, who will bring the money to him, and get his signatures. (38)

THE ATTEMPT TO ARREST THE MAHDI

There was an historical account transmitted by a number of writers about a policeman called Rashiq, explaining an attempt by the Abbasid Al-Mu'tadid to arrest the Mahdi. And that he sent three policemen for that, who went to the house of Imam Hassan Askari in Samirra'; and that they saw the house turning to a sea of water, and they saw also a man standing and praying on a prayer-mat, and were certain of drowning if they attempt moving forward towards him, and their subsequent apology and return. (39)

Majlisi and Sadr both reported another story similar to the above, on the preparations of Al-Mu'tadid for a wider war and raiding the house, and the hearing of the soldiers of recitation of (the Qur'an) from the canopy, and their gathering at the entrance so as to arrest the owner of sound, and his coming out before them. (40)

B: THE TESTIMONY OF THE FOUR DEPUTIES

Perhaps the most important historical evidence on the birth and existence of Imam Muhammad bin Hassan Askari is the testimony of the four special deputies who claimed representing him, in the period of the minor occultation, from 260 A.H to 329 A.H. As these four deputies were claiming seeing, meeting and submitting money to him, as well as receiving his letters and getting his signatures from him for those who believe in him.

The first generations of the representatives or ambassadors or deputies were men from the companions of the two Imams Ali bin Muhammad Hadi and Hassan bin Ali Askari (peace be upon them). Their leader was Uthman bin Sa'id al-Umari who was the deputy of the two Imams in the collection of funds from the Shiites and bringing it to them during their lifetimes. Sheikh Tusi described him as "the Sheikh relied upon, and of the emissaries praised by the Imams." (41)

It was said that he had the confidence of the two Askari Imams. He was not only their deputy in the collection of funds, but he was playing an even more important role of taking the letters of the (two) Imams to the Shiite community. He was enjoying a lot of respect among them. Sheikh Tusi reported in 'al-Ghaybah', a narration from Ahmad bin Ishaq al-Qummi who said: "I went to Abu Hassan Ali bin Muhammad one day and said to him: "O Master! I used to be absent and then present and I may not be chanced whenever I am present, to see you, so whose statement are we to accept, and whose instructions are we to obey?" He said to me: "This is Abu Amr the trusted and the reliable whatever he told you, is from me, and whatever he gave to you, it is from me." When Abu Hassan Passed away, I one day went to Abu Muhammad Hassan Askari, I told him similar to what I said to his father. He replied, "This is Abu Amr, the reliable the honest, the reliable of the past (Imam) and my reliable (man) in my life and my death. Whatever He told you is from me, and whatever he gave to you, it is from me." (42)

This narration discloses that al- Umari was not only the deputy in collecting funds, but was also playing other roles greater than that in taking the messages of the two Imams Hadi and Askari to the Shiites, and was enjoying a lot of respect with the people.

Tusi also reports from Ahmad bin Ali bin Nuh Abu Abbas al-Sirafi who said: "Abu Nasr Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ahmad, known as Ibn Barniyyah al-Katib told them that: Some nobles from the Hadith scholars of Imamate Shiites told him that: Abu Muhammad Abbas bin Ahmad al-Sa'igh said: "Hussain bin Ahmad al-Khusaibi, said: Muhammad bin Ismail and Ali bin Abdullah al-Husnayan told me that: "We went to Abu Muhammad Hassan at 'Surr Man Ra'a, and with him were a group of his devoted companions and supporters. Badr, his servant came and said: "O Master, there were some people at the gate, they are strangers and travelers." He said to them: "These are our supporters in Yemen (as part of a long tradition cited) till he ended with the statement of Hassan to Badr: "Go and bring us Uthman bin Sa'id al-Umari." After a little while Uthman arrived. Abu Muhammad said to him: "Go O Uthman you are the deputy, the reliable and trusted on the funds of Allah, and collect from those people from Yemen, what fund they have carried with them (he cited the remaining part of the tradition) till he said, then all of us said: "O master! By Allah, Uthman is among the best of your supporters and we have learnt more of his position in your service. He is your deputy and reliable man on the wealth of Allah," He said: "Yes do testify that Uthman bin Sa'id al-Umari is my deputy. His son Muhammad is the deputy of my son, your Mahdi." (43)

It should be noticed that this report, in addition to his reliability and deputyship it also confirms the reliability and deputyship of his son.

Tusi reports from Abu Muhammad Harun bin Musa, who said: Jafar bin Muhammad bin Malik al-Fazari narrated from a group of Shiites, among them were: Ali bin Bilal, Ahmad bin Hilal, Muhammad bin Mu'awiyah bin Hakim and Hassan bin Ayyub bin Nuh (in a long and famous tradition) that they all said: "We gathered at the place of Abu Muhammad Hassan bin Ali, asking him about the Hujjah after him; There were forty people with him. Uthman bin Sa'id al-Umari stood up and said to him. "O son of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) I want to ask you on a matter which you know better than me." He said to him: "Sit down O Uthman." He stood angrily in order to go out. He said: "No one of you should go out." None of us went out, till after one hour. He (the Imam) shouted to Uthman. He stood up. He then said: "Should I tell you what brought you? You came in order to ask me of the Hujjah after me." They replied: "Yes," Behold a child like a piece of the moon resembling, more than anyone else, Abu Muhammad, came in. He then said: "This is your Imam after me and my successor on you, the affair will be with him." (44)

Tusi says- from the grandson of Al-Umari, Hibat al-Lah: that when Hassan bin Ali died, Uthman bin Sa'id attended his washing, and supervised over his funeral like the shroud, putting perfume on him and the burial as instructed and dictated by the circumstances..... The (documents containing) signatures of the Sahib al-Amr (Mahdi) were coming from Uthman bin Sa'id, and his son Abu Jafar, to his supporters and the sincere companions of his father on all commands and prohibitions, as well as the answers to what the Shiites used to ask when there was any need to ask, and in the same handwriting as the time of Hassan. So the Shiites never ceased relying and reposing confidence in both of them, till the death of Uthman bin Sa'id. (45)

In this manner Al-Umari became a special deputy of Imam Mahdi, after he claimed his existence and birth and his representing him. Ahmad bin Ishaq once asked him and he said to him: " You are now one whose statements and truthfulness cannot be doubted. I ask you by Allah, and by the truth of the two Imams who relied on you, have you seen the son of Abu Muhammad who is the Sahib al-Zaman? He wept then he said: "On condition that you will not tell that to anyone, so long I am alive." He said: "Yes." He then said: "I have seen him, and his neck was like this (he means, it is the best in beauty and perfection)". He said: " What of the name?" He replied, "You have prohibited from that." (46)

Uthman bin Sa'id al-Umari died two years after the death of Imam Askari, and his son, Muhammad succeeded him as the emissary between Imam Mahdi and the Shiites.

Kulayni and Tusi have reported the (documents with) signatures from the Imam with his endorsement and recommendation, and also on his, appointment as the special deputy. (47)

Abdullah bin Ja'far Al-Himyari al-Qummi, the leader of the Shiites in Qum, says that: " The Mahdi has sent to Al-Umari, the junior a signed (document) in which he said: "Surely to Allah we belong and to Him we shall return, in submission to His command and acceptance of His decree. Your father has lived a happy life and died a praiseworthy man. May Allah have mercy on him, and join him with his friends and

beloved ones. He has been unceasingly striving to serve them, which brought him closer to Allah. May Allah forgive and have mercy on him. Of his perfect happiness and success, Allah has bestowed on him a son like you, who will succeed him after him, and be in his place in his affairs, who will seek mercy for him. I say: All praise be to Allah, may He help, strengthen and empower you and grant you success. He is your friend, protector, and sufficient.” (48)

Al- Himyari said: “ When Abu Amr (Uthman bin Sa’id) Passed away, letters in the same handwriting as we were used to, came to us, (instructing) that we place Abu Ja’far in his place. (49)

Muhammad bin Ibrahim bin Mahziyar al-Ahwazi said that the following came to him after the death of Abu Amr: “ The son, may Allah protect him, he never ceased being trusted by us in the life of the father, may Allah be pleased with him, he will be with us as his father, doing what he did. The son will perform and carry out our orders. May Allah be with him. Listen to him and explain this our conduct.” (50)

Tusi has reported from Ishaq bin Yaqub that he said: ‘I asked Muhammad bin Uthman al-Umari to pass my letter, in which I asked about some issues not clear to me (to the Mahdi). He signed it with the same handwriting of our master, the owner of the house’: “Muhammad bin Uthman al-Umari, (may Allah be pleased with him) and his father before him. He is my trusted one and his letter is my letter. “ (51)

Whenever Al-Umari was asked: Have you seen the Mahdi. He used to answer: “Yes, the last time I saw him was at the Haram in Makkah, and he was saying: “ O Allah fulfill what you have promised me.” And I saw him holding to the curtains of the Ka’bah in the Mustajar, and he was saying: “O Allah, avenge for me against my enemies.” By Allah, the owner of this affair attends the occasion (of Hajj) every year, and he will see people and identify them.” (52)

Tusi says that: “The signatures issued from Al-Umari throughout his life were in the same handwriting as the time of his father. The Shiites do not know anything other than this in this matter.” (53)

Al-Umari, the junior continued on the same post for about fifty (50) years, when he died in the beginning of the fourth century of Hijrah (305 A.H), he gave his will to Hussain bin Ruh al-Nubakhti, who was one of his ten deputies in Baghdad. Nubakhti, who died in the year 325 A.H., gave his will to the fourth deputy, Ali bin Muhammad Al-Samri (Al-Saimiri) as his successor after him, and as a deputy of Imam Mahdi, the Occult. (54)

Besides these four deputies, about twenty four (24) other people of the companions of the two Imams Hadi and Askari or their followers claimed being deputies, like Hassan Al-Shari’I, Muhammad bin Nasir Al-Namiri, Abu Hashim Dawud bin Qasim, Al-Jafari, Ahmad bin Hilal Al-Ibrata’i, Muhammad bin Ali bin Bilal, Ishaq Al-Ahmar, Hajiz bin Yazid, Muhammad bin Salih Al-Hamdani, Muhammad bin Ja’far bin Aun Al-Asadi Al-Razi, Muhammad bin Ibrahim bin Mahziyar, Hussain bin Mansour Al-Hallaj, Ja’far bin Suhail Al-Saiqil, Muhammad bin Ghalib Al-Isfahani, Ahmad bin Ishaq Ash’ari Al-Qummi, Qasim bin Muhammad bin Ali bin Ibrahim Al-Hamdani, Muhammad bin

Salih Al-Qummi, Qasim bin Al-Ala and his son Hassan, Muhammad bin Ali Al-Shalmaghani bin Abi Al-Azaqir and finally Abu Dalf al-Katib.

Many of these people claimed a special relationship between them and the two Imams Hadi and Askari, and hence with Imam Mahdi. As many of them also claimed the ability to produce miracles, and the possessing of the knowledge of the Unseen (Ghayb) and they present secret letters claiming that they came with them from the Occult Imam, and they collect funds and other legal rights from the people.

The Imamate Shiites who believed in the existence of the twelfth Imam have differed among themselves on the truth of the claims of these deputies, and the validity of such claims. Some of them accepted and believed in the claims of the four early deputies. Another group like the Nusayriyyah believed the claims of Shari'i and Namiri. Some others believed in the claims of other groups.

Anyhow, some regarded the existence of the four deputies and others as a historical testimony to the existence of a son for Imam Hassan Askari, being the Imam Mahdi, in addition to those historical narrations that discussed his birth, and his being seen during the life of his father and the meeting with him after that.

Syed Muhammad Baqir Sadr says in his book 'Bahth hawl al-Mahdi,' "It is not rational that all these just, trusted and reliable deputies will lie in their claim of being deputies or in the existence of Imam Mahdi, after the consensus of the Shiites on their truthfulness, piety and God-fearing.

Some of the earlier scholars of Hadith, like Nu'mani Muhammad bin Abi Zaynab considered the existence of these four special deputies, in the period of the minor Occultation and their absence in the period of the major Occultation, which extends from that time to the day of the Appearance, and the conformity of the two periods with the reports on the existence of the two Occultations the minor and the major, for Imam Mahdi, as evidence on the existence of Muhammad bin Hassan Askari, and the validity of his Occultation.

A- THE LETTERS OF MAHDI

Saduq Tusi, Ibn Shahrashub, Tabrisi have mentioned a number of letters which they claimed to have been sent by Imam Muhammad bin Hassan Askari, to a number of his deputies in the period of the minor Occultation. Among these was what Tusi reported in 'Al-Ghaybah' from Ahmad bin Ishaq Ash'ari al-Qummi, who says that he has written to Ibn Hassan a letter on the claim of Ja'far bin Ali Hadi, for the people of Qum to follow him after the death of his brother. He said in it: 'The Sahib al-Zaman has written a letter to him, containing his blaming and suspecting of Ja'far of ignorance of religion and of disobedience, drinking wine and disobedience to Allah, and of possessing no any evidence, and the call to test him and confirming the impermissibility of the Imamate going to two brothers after Hassan and Hussain'. (55)

As Tusi also reports a second narration from Ibn Abi Ghanim Al-Qazwini that he, and a group of Shiites differed on the existence of the successor (Imam Askari) and they quarreled among themselves. They then wrote on that a letter and sent it to Al-Nahiyah, and informed him of their querrel on that. The response to their letter came in the handwriting of (the Mahdi) and it contained words of pity and sadness on them, and a call to submission and the not attempting to uncover the secrecy of the Occultation. (56)

There was a third letter reported by Saduq in 'Ikmal al-Din' from Ishaq bin Yaqub who said: "I asked Muhammad bin Uthman al-Umari to take a letter for me in which I have enquired on some issues that have confused me (to the Mahdi). The response came in the handwriting of our master 'Sahib al-Dar' (the Mahdi) and in it was the following words: "As for the events that took place, refer to our reporters of traditions regarding them. They are my evidence upon you and I am the evidence of Allah on them." It contains the recommendation (of the Mahdi) and his confidence in Al-Umari, as well as the legalization of Khums during the occultation, and prohibition on asking the causes and reasons for the Occultation. (57)

Saduq transmitted another letter in 'Ikmal al-Din', from Imam Mahdi to the first deputy: Uthman bin Sa'id Al-Umari and his son, Muhammad-the second deputy. He mentioned in it the stories of the conflict between Shiites on the successor, and the saying of some of them that none exist except Ja'far bin Ali. He demands (in it) from the Shiites not to look for anything concealed to them, so as not to commit sin, and not to uncover what Allah has concealed lest they regret it, and to stick only to a general mention, indirect statements, without explanation and disclosure. (58)

Ibn shahra'ashub in 'Al-Manaqib' and Tabrisi in 'Al-Ihtijaj' have further mentioned that: Mufid has brought out or published copies of the letters said to have been sent by Imam Mahdi to him, through a village Arab, and in the handwriting of another man. The Mahdi was calling Mufid in them-the righteous brother, the guided- master and the helping savior, the one inspired by the truth and its evidence, the good servant, helper of the truth who calls to it, with the word of truth. (59)

These are the most important stories reported on the sightings of Imam Muhammad bin Hassan Askari, at the time of his birth, in the lifetime of his father, and at the time of his death and just before that. There were other stories reported on sighting him in the Grand Mosque (Makkah) in "Tawaf" or in a valley of the villages of Taif, or in Madinah or here or there, and these were of less importance and weaker as regards their transmission.

Perhaps the story of Hakimah and Abu Al-Adyan al-Basri are the two most well known stories reported on the birth and the existence of the twelfth Imam.

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CHAPTER FOUR:

THE EVIDENCE OF MIRACLES ON THE EXISTENCE OF THE MAHDI

In addition to the rational, traditional and historical evidences on the existence of Muhammad bin Hassan Askari, the supporters of this theory cite a fourth evidence, the 'miracles', which they claim the four deputies' have performed, as well as the knowledge of the Unseen, which they possessed.

We have demonstrated many such 'Miracles' while discussing the historical narrations on the birth of the son of Hassan and his existence in the last chapter. We will now mention the extraordinary performances presented by the four deputies, namely: Uthman bin Sa'id al-Umari, Muhammad bin Uthman, Hussain bin Ruh al-Nubakhti and Ali bin Muhammad al-Samri, the representatives of Imam Mahdi in the period of the minor Occultation, which extended around 70 years from 260 A. H to 329 A.H, the date of the death of the fourth deputy.

Sheikh Mufid has stated in 'Al-Irshad' the story of Muhammad bin Ibrahim bin Mahziyar, who doubted the existence of Imam Mahdi after the death of Imam Askari, and who said that, his father bequeathed a big amount of money for him, and directed him to fear Allah in that wealth and to submit it to the successor (Khalifah) of Imam Askari. But he said to himself: I will take this money to Baghdad, rent a house they're on the coast and I will not tell anyone anything. If something becomes clear to me after that like the days of Abu Muhammad I will give it, otherwise I will spend it on my enjoyments and desires. He went to Baghdad and entered a house on the coast and remained there for some days. He was in that when behold a letter with a messenger came to him, and in it thus: "O Muhammad! With you is such and such amount..." till the whole story was narrated to him all that was with him, and something of which he has no knowledge of. He therefore gave the amount to the messenger. After some days, an announcement came to him, being appointed as a deputy in place of his father. (1)

Kulayni, Mufid and Tusi all mentioned many examples of miracles of the deputies and their knowledge of the Unseen, as evidence of their link with Imam Mahdi, and on the existence of Mahdi and his connection with the heavens.

Of these was the raising of Imam Mahdi of a camel and what is on it, to the sky.

Of these was the prevention of the Mahdi of a man from circumcising his son, and the death of the child immediately he was circumcised.

He also prevented a man from traveling on land and sea and instructed him to stay in Kufah, and the appearance of pirates and highway robbers on the caravans at that time.

Of these was the story of Al-Umari discovering the place of a trust forgotten by the messenger in his belongings, despite that the messenger did not take anything to remind him or a book on the issue.

Other miracles include:

- His telling Al-Umari, the date of his death, the day, the month and the year.
- The mention of strange responses from Al-Umari, and his telling a man of the details of his secret disagreement with his wife.
- The power and ability of the third deputy-Hassan bin Ruh Nubakhti to read a white letter and knowing its contents and responding to it immediately.
- In forming Ali bin Babawaih Saduq of the birth of two righteous children for him in future.
- Nubakhti informing a number of people of solving their problems in future in specific terms and in details, and the death of some people at the time specified before.
- The knowledge of Nubakhti of foreign languages and speaking them miraculously, without learning them.
- The fourth deputy Al-Samri, informed his companions, while he was in Baghdad, of the death of Ali bin Hussain bin Babawaih in Qum in the same day.
- He also informed the Shiites of his death after six days.
- Qasim bin Al-Ala informed of his imminent death after 40 days, and the return of his sight to him after losing it for a long time, and his telling of the long life of his son, unlike his earlier brothers.
- The knowledge of the deputies as regards the source of the wealth that comes to them.
- The telling of Muhammad bin Ziyad Al-Saimiri of his death in a particular time. (2)

Tusi pointed to the evidence of miracles, and considered it an evidence on the Imamate of the son of Hassan; and the establishment of his Occultation and his very existence, because they are reports that contain narrations related to the Unseen, and of foretelling something before it happens, in a miraculous manner. (Arguing on the basis that) no one knows that except the one informed by Allah, from the tongue of His Prophet (peace be upon him), and it reaches him from the one whose truthfulness has been ascertained by evidence. This is because miracles do not appear on the hands of liars. If this is established, it points to the existence of the one to whom that is attributed. (3)

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CHAPTER FIVE:

THE EVIDENCE OF CONSENSUS (IJMA’)

After the philosophical (rational), the traditional (transmitted), the historical and the miraculous evidences, there is also the evidence of consensus (Ijma) pointed to by some of those who believe in the theory of the existence of Muhammad bin Hassan Askari and his birth.

The first person to point to this evidence of consensus was Sa’ad bin Abdullah Ash’ari al-Qummi in ‘Al-Maqalat wa al-Firaq’, p. 106.

Sheikh Saduq has reported from Nubakhti that: the entire Shiites have agreed (have reached a consensus), that Imam Hassan Askari has left behind an issue who was the Imam. He said that: “Anyone who believed the Imamate of eleven Imams from the forefathers of the Qa’im, it is incumbent on him to accept the Imamate of the twelfth, on the basis of the texts from his fore-fathers which contain his name and lineage and the consensus of the entire Shiites on the belief in his Imamate. He is the Qa’im who will appear after a very long Occultation. He will fill the earth with justice and equity. (Ikmal al-Din, p. 44 and 93)

This is what comes to the mind first these days, when many people argue that the issue of the existence of Imam Mahdi Muhammad bin Hassan Askari, is one of the issues of consensus of opinion in the ranks of the Twelver-Imam Shiites to say the least.

CHAPTER SIX:

THE OCCULTATION

A- WHY OCCULTATION?

After presenting all the rational, traditional and historical evidences on the existence of Muhammad bin Hassan Askari, and his birth in the middle of the third (3rd) century of Hijrah, his occultation from sight and non-appearance; and taking up of the leadership of the Islam; and assuming the position of Imamate, constitute the greatest challenges for those who believe in his existence. And due to this, they had to explain the wisdom behind his occultation. They did present a number of theories in interpreting the perplexing phenomenon of the occultation, as follows:

(1) The Theory of Unknown Wisdom

Sheikh Saduq was inclined towards this theory in his 'Ikmal al-Din', and saw the necessity of finding wisdom in the occultation of the Imam, based on the signs of Allah's wisdom in the previous evidences (Imams). He said that: 'Our belief in the infallibility of Imam Mahdi will necessitate our acceptance of the existence of wisdom behind his occultation.' (1)

Sayyid Murtada 'Alam al-Huda' has denied the necessity of knowing the specific reason for the occultation, and that the general knowledge on that is enough, in addition to the belief in the infallibility of the Imam. He considered the knowledge of that similar to the knowledge of what comes in the 'Mutashabihah' (ambiguous) verses of the Great Quran. (2)

Likewise, Sheikh Tusi stated the necessity of supposing a reason for the occultation of the Sahib al-Zaman and his hiding, and the belief in the existence of palatable wisdom in that, even if we do not know it in details. This is just as we suppose reasons and wisdom for Allah's creation of animals and harmful beings, ugly forms and pain in children, even if we do not know the wisdom therein in details. He said: " If we knew his Imamate through evidence, and knew his infallibility through another evidence and knew that he has gone into occultation, we take his occultation in the manner that is compatible with his infallibility. There is no difference between the two cases? (3)

Sheikh Muhammad Hussain Kashif Ghita said in 'Asl al-Shiah wa Usuluha',
"The objection on the wisdom (behind the occultation) is invalid, if the evidences are

established on the necessity of the existence of the Imam in every period of time. The world is never devoid of evidence. His existence is benevolence and what he does is another benevolence.” He considered the position more meticulous and ambiguous than that. He also confessed his ignorance of the wisdom, and non-arrival at what is real good (Maslahah). (4)

2- THE THEORY OF DISTINCTION

There is another theory in interpreting the ‘occultation of the Imam’, that is the theory of distinction and differentiating the Shiites and sifting them, so as to know the truth of their faith in the Mahdi and their perseverance before trials.

Saduq and Tusi have transmitted a number of reports in this regard, from both Imams Baqir and Sadiq (peace be upon them.). Some of these reports indicate the nonappearance of the ‘Sahib al-Amr’ till after the elimination of one third of (human) population, when only very few people remain, and after that the Shiites would be sifted like the sifting of wheat from chaff. (5)

One of those reports states: “ There must be an occultation for the owner of this affair, till those claiming this affair rescind their position. It is a trial from Allah, through which He tests His creation, your minds cannot grasp this matter, and your ambitions fall short of that. If you live (long enough) you will perceive him.” (6)

This resembles another of those reports which says: “The occultation of the Mahdi is like the delay of the punishment sought by Nuh (A.S) from the heavens, to the extent that groups of those who believed in him became apostates, one group after the other---similarly, the occultation of the Qa’im will be long, to the extent that the truth will be clear and will glare from any cloudiness, by the apostasy of all those Shiites that are not true to their faith, and were close to hypocrisy (Nifaq), when the Qa’im is well established and there is peace and tranquility (everywhere).” (7)

It was only Saduq who entertained this view. All of Mufid, Murtada and Tusi have abandoned it, even though; they have reported some reports containing it. Tusi has interpreted those narrations on the trial of the Shiites during the occultation, that they mean the trial of the Shiites coincided with the occultation, not that the latter was the cause of the former. (8)

3.THE THEORY OF FEAR

This is the strongest of these theories in interpreting the cause of the occultation. Kulayni has reported in 'Al-Kafi', and Saduq also in 'Ikmal-al-Din' a number of traditions from Imam Sadiq, pointing to the fact that the cause of the occultation was fear on the life (of the Imam) and insinuation (Taqiyyah). (9)

Sheikh Mufid in 'Al-Irshad' said: "Hassan left behind his son the Awaited for the rule of truth. He did conceal his birth and kept his affairs a secret, due to the difficult circumstances of the time, and the serious search by the authorities of the time for the Mahdi, and their doing all that is possible in order to find him. That was also due to what the Shiite sect had spread regarding him, and their waiting for his appearance. So his son did not appear in his lifetime, and the general populace did not know him after his death." (10)

Mufid considered the circumstances surrounding the occultation of Imam Mahdi as more difficult than the circumstance of the earlier Imams of the 'Ahl al- Bayt, who did not hide themselves from the people. They were protecting (themselves) through taqiyyah. The rulers of the time knew of the emergence of the Mahdi by means of the sword, and due to that they were eager in pursuing and eliminating him. The reason that prevented him from coming out (to the public) was the lack of supporters and helpers." (11)

Sayyid Murtada emphasized in his 'Al- Shafi' thus: "The cause of his occultation was the threat of the unjust rulers, and their not allowing him free hand to conduct himself in things he has under his control. When they stood before what he wants (to do), the responsibility of performing the functions and duties of the Imamate falls. And if he has fears on his life, it became necessary to go into hiding and occultation." (12)

Al-Karajiki says in 'Kanz al-Fawaid': " The reason for the occultation of the Imam was the threat from the unjust rulers and their search (for him) to kill him, and his being informed (by Allah) that whenever he brings himself out, they will kill him, and that whenever they are able to get him, they will eliminate him. It is only when he will be established and is powerful that it becomes incumbent on him to perform his duties, that is when there is no hindrance and fear has been removed as regards his life and existence. Whenever such is not possible it is compulsory to practice taqiyyah and occultation due to this reason is mandatory. This is because freeing oneself from harm is mandatory rationally and traditionally. (13)

Tusi limited the causes of the occultation to fear. He said: "There is no cause to prevent his appearance except fear on his life, if not because of that, it would not be right for him to go into hiding. He bears hardship and harm, as the position of the Imams, as well as the Prophets, (peace be upon them) is higher due to the great hardships they bear for Allah's sake. " 14

However, why should Imam Muhammad bin Hassan fears his being killed, while Imam Hussain did sacrifice his life in Karbala? Sayyid Murtada, Sheikh Tusi and Al-Karajiki

responded to that by saying: "No one among humans can stand the position of the Mahdi as he is the last of the Imams, and the welfare and good of all responsible and matured men rest squarely on him. " (15)

This response presupposes a number of assumptions:

- 1- Specifying the Mahdism of the twelfth Imam by the earlier Imams, and a pointer to him before (his appearance).
- 2- The existence of political crisis and the enmity and fear of the Abbasid authorities regarding the Mahdi, and the existence of greater fear on the part of the Imam, that existed during the years of the earlier Imams under the Umayyad and Abbasid rules.
- 3- The finality of Imamate in the twelfth Imam and limiting Imamate to him.
- 4- The prohibition of taqiyyah on the part of the Mahdi before his appearance.

Otherwise if we say that ' the earlier Imams did not specify the identity of the Mahdi previously, then there will not be any need for him to go into hiding from the time of his birth. If it is established that the relationship between the Ahl al-Bayt' and the Abbasids during that time was normal and positive and that there was no pressure or political strains, and then there was no need for the occultation. If we say that the twelfth Imam is one of the Imams not the last of them, as the Imamate Shiites believe in the beginning till the end of the third century. Then there will be no necessity for the occultation, because the earlier Imams were all possible targets for killers, but they did not go to occultation. And if we say that the twelfth Imam is supposing permitted to use taqiyyah as the other Imams, it was with his ability to deny his identity and his Mahdism till the time he appears (as the Mahdi), and he would not need to go into hiding from the time of his birth.

B: THE OCCULTATION, WHERE?

Most of the reports that mention the Mahdi Muhammad bin Hassan Askari indicate that he was in the house of his father in 'Surr Man Raa' the then capital of the Abbasid rule, and that those who witnessed and saw him in the lifetime of his father, saw him in that house. Some of the narrations state that: 'He went out to pray on the body of his father, who died and was buried in Samirra'i. And that he met after that with a delegation from Qum, which came searching for the new Imam. That he remained inside the house for many years, until the attack of Mu'tadid's forces in the canopy (Sardab). The Abbasid Caliph, Nasir bi Allah has built a tent on the place of the canopy ('Sardab'), it still exists there to this day. The Shiites used to visit it from all places. It is called the tent

(Qubbah) of Sardab of the occultation, beside the graves of Imams Hadi and Askari in the city of Samirra'i', north of Baghdad.

Sheikh Mufid cited in 'Al-Irshad' the story of a man called 'Ali bin Hussain' saying that: He visited Imam Hadi in his house in Samirra'i' and that he stayed with him for three days. As he also mentions the story of Hassan bin Fadl, who says that he passed by the camp, i.e. Samirra'i, and Imam Hadi sent to him a bag with Dinars in it. (16)

Mufid also transmitted from Hassan bin Abdul Hamid that he doubted the affair of one of the deputies of the Mahdi called Hajiz bin Yazid, and then he went to the camp. Out of it came to him what confirmed to him the truth of the deputy and put an end to his doubts. (17)

C: WHAT IS THE TIME- FRAME OF THE OCCULTATION?

The period of the occultation, at the inception of the doctrine ranges between days, months and years not more than 10, as indicated by many narrations mentioned by Kulayni in 'Al-Kafi' and Tusi in 'Al-Ghaybah'. (18)

Other reports on the other hand were saying that: 'It will be as long as about 30 to 40 years'. (19) Some other narrations transmitted by Nu'mani in 'Al-Ghaybah', pointed to limiting the period of the occultation more to the tender age of Imam Mahdi at the time of his appearance. Nu'mani interpreted such reports with his young age, at the time the Imamate was bestowed on him. (20)

Tusi had reported another tradition from Imam Baqir (peace be upon him) that: "The owner of this affair (the Mahdi) is not more than 40 years old". (21)

Other reports indicate that his age may be more than 120 years. (22)

Tusi has reported in 'Al-Ghaybah' from Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) that he said: "Do you deny that Allah will extend the life of the owner of the Affair (the Mahdi) as he extended the life of Nuh (A.S)?" He responded to those who find flaws in the length of the period of occultation, and it's crossing what is normal, that the issue is not as they stated. Even if it is so, it is possible that Allah will do something extraordinary for some kind of good (Maslahah). (23)

Saduq and Tusi cited the occultations of Musa bin Imran, Yusuf bin Ya'qub, Yunus bin Matta, people of the cave, the owner of the Donkey, Nuh, Salman, the Persian, Dajjal, Luqman bin Ad, Rabi bin Daba' and Ya'rib bin Qahtan, who were said to have left their people for specific periods of time.

D: WAY OF CONFIRMING THE IDENTITY OF THE MAHDI

Anyhow, the long occultation has led to and is still leading to an objective problem, namely: The way of recognizing and confirming the identity of the Mahdi after his appearance. This problem was discussed in the beginning, especially during the minor Occultation, but it imposed itself with the passage of time....It became the center of discussion between the supporters of the existence of the Mahdi and those who rejected that at that time.

Sheikh Saduq confronted the opponents on this issue, and he said in response to the Mu'tazilites and those who reject (the idea of Mahdi), those who were finding fault on this point: "It is possible through the transmission of that of the one, whose report serves as an evidence even if from among his close friends. It is also possible that a miracle may appear to confirm that. The second response is the one we depend on, and we use it against our opponents, even though the first one is also valid". (24)

Both Mufid and Tusi have pointed to this issue: 'The problem of recognizing the Mahdi and confirming his identity at the time of his appearance, by mentioning a big number of miracles and strange universal signs, that appear from the Mahdi, as signs of his time. Sayyid Murtada has treated the problem, while discussing the possibility of a temporary appearance during the period of the occultation. He set as conditions, the appearance of signs to confirm his truth. (25)

E: THE SIGNS OF THE APPEARANCE

Kulayni in 'Al-Kafi', Saduq in 'Ikmal al-Din', and 'Uyun Akhbar al-Rida', Mufid in 'Al-Irshad', Tusi in 'Al-Ghaybah' and Al-Iyashi in his Tafsir, all mention a group of narrations linking the appearance and occurrence of some universal signs, related to halting the movement of stars and planets, changing their rule and things similar to that; or like the sun becoming dull from midday to late afternoon; or the appearances of the chest and the face of a man in the sun disc; or like the occurrence of solar or lunar eclipses in an abnormal manner; or like the solar eclipse in the middle of the month of Ramadan, and the lunar eclipse at the end of it; or like the speaking of the banner and the sword to Imam Mahdi and , his call that it is not permissible to sit down after that time. He will go out and kill the enemies of Allah wherever he finds them. He will establish the laws of Allah and judge by His injunctions.

In addition to the story of the sun rising from the west, and the appearance of a star from the east, its light will be similar to that of the moon.... the disobedience of servants to their masters and killing themthe deformation of people of innovations to monkeys and pigs...the servants taking over the lands of their masters.... in addition to a call from the heavens to be heard by all people of the earth, people of each language in their own language, the rising of the dead from their graves till

they return to the world, and their recognizing each other and exchange of visits, in addition to all these, Mufid mentions that: 'Jibril will descend on the Qa'im (Mahdi) to pay his allegiance at the time of his appearance'. Tusi says that: 'The companions of the Qa'im will be carried to the place of the Mahdi in a miraculous manner in a twinkling of an eye!

Mufid mentions some universal signs that will occur at the time of the appearance, like the prolongation of the day ten- folds, to become 240 hours!

This is what Tusi interprets as regard a similar tradition where he says: "When the Qa'im appears, Allah will command the stars and the planets to slacken its movement, to the extent that the day in his days will be like ten days of your time, and a month will be like 10 months, and a year like 10 years of your time".

Kulayni reports a tradition from Imam Baqir (peace be upon him), in which he foretold that the Shiites would use things like (telephone, television) in speaking to the Qa'im, and viewing him from a distance, and from all regions. That will be at the time of his appearance.

Some narrations state that at the time of the appearance of the Qa'im, the earth will be brighten by the light of its Lord, and men will not be in need of sunlight, and darkness will be eliminated. A man will live long in his domain and he will have one thousand (1000) male children, without a single female!

Finally, the narrations on the appearance of the Mahdi discuss the period of his rule. One of such narrations says that: "He will rule for seven years, which will be like seventy (70) years of our time".

Another report says that the Qa'im will rule for three hundred and nine (309) years, like the period of time spent by the people of the cave in their cave. A third report says he will rule for nineteen (19) years only. (26)

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5. Ikmal al-Din, p. 346, 348, Al-Ghaybah, p. 203 204 and 206
6. Ikmal al-Din, p. 360, Al-Ghaybah, p. 104, 204
7. Ikmal al-Din, p. 352, 357, Al-Ghaybah, p. 104, 108
8. Tusi: Al-Ghaybah, p. 203
9. Al-Kafi, vol. 1 pp. 337-338, 340, Ikmal al-Din, p. 481
10. p. 345
11. Mufid: Al-Amali, Al-Fusul al-Mukhtarah, p. 395
12. Murtada: Al-Shafi, vol. 3p, 149
13. ibid., vol. 1, p. 371

14. Al-Ghaybah, p. 203
15. Al-Shafi, vol. 1p. 147,Al-Ghaybah, p. 64, Kanz al-Fawaid, vol, 1, p. 341
16. Mufid: Al-Irshad
17. ibid.,p. 355
18. Al-Kafi, vol.1, p. 338,Tusi: Al-Ghaybah, p. 104
19. Al- Kafi, vol. 1 p. 340
20. ibid, p. 323
21. Al-Ghaybah,p. 258
22. Nu'mani: Al-Ghaybah,p.126
23. Al-Ghaybah,pp.76-78
24. Ikmal al-Din,vol. 1,pp.61-62
25. Al-Shafi,vol. 1, p. 149
26. Kulayni: Al-Kafi,Al-Raudah,p. 201, Saduq: Ikmal al-Din,p. 268,Uyun Akhbar al-Rida, vol. 1,p.63,Mufid: Al-Irshad,p. 355, 359,362,Tusi: Al-ghaybah,p. 274,283-285. Al-Iyashi in his Tafsir, vol.2,p.326.

SECTION TWO:

CRITIQUE OF THE TWELVER- IMAM SHIITES' MAHDISM THEORY

CHAPTER ONE:

IMAM MUHAMMAD BIN HASSAN ASKARI: A HISTORICAL REALITY OR A PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTION?

The Twelver-Imam Mahdism theory was a complicated theory comprising of belief in the existence of the twelfth Imam: 'Muhammad bin Hassan Askari' and in his being the Awaited Mahdi. It admits that Imam Hassan Askari did not openly declare that he has a son. The theory rather, claims that, he hid him in secret due to the fear of Abbasid authorities, that he would overthrow their thrones, and due to that, they were searching for him to kill him, while still in the cradle.

Serious academic research on the inception of this theory however, reveals the existence of a long time interval between the two parts of the theory. As it was in the beginning, centered around the existence of a son for Imam Askari, who inherits the Imamate from him. But it later turned out to be belief in his being the Awaited and occult Mahdi. The theory found in the 'Occultation of the Mahdi', an interpretation of the non-declaration of his birth by his father, and his non-appearance after that.

In order to confirm the truth of this theory that plays a very great role in the history of Islam, and in shaping of the Twelver-Imam Shiite political thought, it is necessary to dissect the different components of this theory, and study each in depth and objectively. We would have firstly to find out: Was the Shiite Mahdism theory before the middle of the third (3rd) century of Hijrah, clearly known and restricted to the person of the twelfth Imam- Muhammad bin Hassan Askari, or it was ambiguous and a general abstract idea.

A- THE AMBIGUITY SURROUNDING THE IDENTITY OF THE MAHDI FROM AHL AL-BAYT

The history of the Imams from the household of the Prophet (Ahl al-Bayt) (peace be upon them), and their traditions being preserved by Imamate Shiite heritage, confirm the ambiguity surrounding the identity of Imam Mahdi and the non-declaration of his name or the time of his appearance. This was not due to the fear of the then authorities, but due to its not being specified beforehand. This was because Mahdism was initially mere idea and hope, hovering over the head of any one of them. This hope came to the fore when Imam Ali became the Caliph, and it became more intense after the murder of Imam Hussain bin Ali in Karbala. That was the time when many Shiites started preparing for revenge, and the overthrow of the Umayyad regime through armed revolt. The people were gathering around this or other Imam of the Ahl al-Bayt, with Mahdism being attributed to him. He will proclaim that and succeed, or die due to his proclamation and appearance. Some will then say, he has gone into hiding and occultation, and he will reappear in future.

If the identity of the Mahdi has been outlined previously, since the time of Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and the Shiites have reached consensus regarding it, they would not have gone to the left and to the right, and they would not have been perplexed, asking the Imams on the identity of the Mahdi.

Imam Muhammad bin Ali Baqir while addressing the Shiites said: "You never cease looking towards one of us, saying: "He is the one!" then he returns to his Lord, till the time when Allah will raise for this affair, one about whom you do not know whether he has been born or not, whether he has been created or not!" (1)

Kulayni says: Hakam bin Abi Na'im once came to Imam Baqir in Madinah and said to him: "I have taken an oath between Rukn and Maqam (two holiest parts of the Ka'bah in Makkah) that if I meet you, I will not leave Madinah until I know whether you are the Qa'im of the family of the Prophet or not. "

Imam Baqir said to him: "O Hakam, all of us stand by the commands of Allah"

Hakam however, was not satisfied with this general response, so he asked him specifically:

"Are you the Mahdi?" Baqir replied again in a general sense: "All of us guide to Allah" So Hakam asked more specifically and clearly:

"Are you the owner of the sword and the one who inherited it?" For the third time the Imam responded vaguely:

"All of us are owners of the swords, who inherited them."

Hakam then asked (demanding) more clarity: "Are you the one to kill to enemies of Allah?" Imam Baqir replied:

"O Hakam! How can I be the one, when I am 45 years of age? While the owner of this affair is closer to the time of breast-feeding than me, and lighter when he rides on the back of an animal." (2)]

Kulayni and Nu'mani both say: "That Imam Sadiq did not like identifying the person of the Mahdi. Abu Hamzah one of his companions once asked him:

"Are you the owner of this affair?" He replied: "No." He then said: "What about your son?" He said: "No." He also said: "Is your grandchild the one?" He replied, "No." Then he said: "Is he your great grandchild?" He replied: "No". He (hakam) said at last "Then who is he?" He replied: "The one who will fill the world with justice as it was filled with injustice and tyranny, after the interval of Imams, as the Messenger of Allah was raised after the interval of Messengers (peace be upon them)." (3)

Supporting this is the fact that when Imam Sadiq convinced the poet Sayyid al-Himyari, who believed in Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah being the Mahdi, when he convinced him of his death, he did not specify for him who is the Mahdi. Al-Himyari said some poetic verses recording his transformation from the belief in the Mahdism of Ibn Hanafiyyah. But he did not mention the identity of the Mahdi: The meaning of the poetry is as follows:

"My prolonged statements on the son of Khaulah was not in opposition, from my side, to the pure lineage. But what was reported from the inheritor of Muhammad (peace be upon him), and what he said cannot be falsified. That the owner of the affair will be lost, not being seen and concealed, like the fearful one, watching (people's movements). The wealth of the lost will be distributed, as if his loss was in the grave. When it was reported that the son of Khaulah was lost (in occultation), we accepted it and went on speaking on it. We said he is the Mahdi and the Qa'im, in whose justice all will live. If you say no, your statement is the truth, and what I have been instructed is inevitable, without any prejudice. I testify to my Lord, that your statement is the evidence on all the people, the obedient and the disobedient. The owner of the affair and the Qa'im, whom I longed for delightfully, will go into occultation inevitably, may Allah bless him while in occultation. He remains (in it) for some time and then appear at other times and he will

rule over the East and the West. This is my religious belief in secret and in the open, I will not mind even if I am blamed on it."

Although Imam Sadiq, in an earlier report did not deny the possibility of his being the Qa'im as he did not emphasize it, Saduq reports from Ibn Abi Ja'far that he heard Sadiq saying: " Woe onto the tyrants of the Arabs of a matter that has drawn closer." He also reports from Sadir, and he from Abu Abdullah that he said: " O Sadir, stay at your home, not leaving it and stay for days and nights. When it reaches you that Sufyan has appeared, come to us, even if on your feet." (4) This reveals that Imam Sadiq was telling his companions of the imminence of his appearance. Muhammad bin Hassan Saffar however, reports in 'Basair al-Darajat' from Abu Basir that he one day came to Abu Abdullah and said to him:

- "May I be your ransom, I would like to touch your chest." (Abu Basir was a blind man). He replied him:
- " Do it". He said: I torched his chest and his shoulders. He said, "Why this, O father of Muhammad?" Abu Basir said: " May I be your ransom...I heard your father saying that the shoulders of the Qa'im are a bit down, spacious and broad between them." Imam Sadiq then said:"O father of Muhammad, My father wore the shield of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and it did not fit him.... I also wore it and it was this and that.... It will be worn by the Qa'im, and it would be as it was with the Messenger of Allah tight and fit, as if he raised its two sides by two rings. The owner of this affair will not be one, over forty (40) years of age. (5)

Tusi reports in 'Al-Ghaybah' a dialogue conducted between Imam Sadiq and Abu Basir, who asked him "Has this affair a long period (before being accomplished) so we relax ourselves till it comes?" The Imam said to him: " Yes, but you revealed the secret and spread it, so Allah increased (the period)." He reports another tradition, with more direct bearing and clarity, where the Imam Sadiq said: "This affair was in me, but Allah delayed it, and He will do what He wishes in my progeny after that." (6) This shows that the hope of Mahdism was on Imam Sadiq during his time. Due to this, when he died and the circumstances were not ripe for him to achieve his desired hope (ambition) the one inherent in the hearts of the Shiites, some of his followers, some of those very close to him, denied and rejected the news of his death, insisting that he went into occultation, and that he will appear very soon. They said: He was the Awaited Mahdi. The leader of such people was the leader of Shiites in Basrah: Abdullah bin Nawus.

THE HOPE OF KADHIM BEING THE MAHDI

With the intensity of the Abbasid political pressure on Imam Musa bin Ja'far Kadhimi, the hope of Shiites who believed in his Imamate, increased as to his declaration and revolt leading to a rebellion against the Abbasid rule. Most of the Shiites believed seriously that Musa was the Qa'im

and the Mahdi. They reported many traditions from Baqir and Sadiq in identifying his person. They might have added to it many things from their sides, based on their eagerness, love and suffering.

When Imam Kadhim died after thirty-five years of waiting and hope, the general Musawite Shiite populace did not believe the story of his death. They insisted on believing in his occultation, and his being alive and confirming that he was the Awaited Mahdi, who will appear and fill the earth with justice and fairness as it has been filled with injustice and tyranny

RIDA DENIES THE LIKELIHOOD OF HIS BEING THE MAHDI

That hope of (the Mahdi) returned to the Shiites after about twenty (20) years. That was when the Abbasid caliph Ma'mun called on Imam Ali bin Musa Rida, in the year 200 A.H. to Khurasan, and he appointed him as the Crown Prince in the year 201 A. H. This revived the hope in the minds of the Shiites and led them to the belief in the possibility of Rida becoming the Awaited Mahdi.

Kulayni reports in 'Al-Kafi' that Ayub bin Nuh went to Imam Rida and said to him. "I hope that you will be the owner of this affair, and that Allah may bring it to you without the use of sword. You have already received oath of allegiance, and money have been minted with your name (on it)." Imam Rida however shattered his expectations and rejected being the Mahdi. (7)

When the poet Da'bal al-Khuza'i came to Imam Rida and recited a well-known poem: "Schools of verses not being recited, and the house of revelation without premises", he pointed to the Mahdi in an ambiguous manner. He said: "The Imam has emerged. It was necessary for him to emerge, based on the name of Allah and His blessings. He distinguishes for us between the truth and falsehood. He rewarded for favours and calamities." He did not mention him by name.

The identification of Imam Mahdi with the twelfth Imam of the Ahl al-Bayt, as it is known by the Twelver-Imam Shiites today, took place in a later date long after the death of Imam Hassan Askari, and the claim of his having a son in secret, in the beginning of the fourth century of Hijrah approximately. This happened after the development of the theory of 'divine' Imamate and its transformation from infinite number to limiting them to only twelve (12), so that the sect will be a Twelver-Imam (sect).

Sheikh Saduq has mentioned in 'Ikmal al-Din', which he wrote in the middle of the fourth century of Hijrah, a big number of traditions from the Noble Prophet (peace be upon him), and from the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). Some of them point to the Qa'im or the Mahdi without specifying his name and the name of his father. Some of them emphasized and specified his position, as the twelfth (Imam), and that he is the son of Hassan Askari. As it came in another report that says that: Imam Rida asked the poet 'Da'bal Al-Khuza'i', after he has recited his poem in which he pointed to the Mahdi in an ambiguous manner. He said to him: "Do you know who will be that

Imam? And when will he appear?" He replied: " No, my master, except that I heard of the emergence of an Imam from among you (Ahl al- Bayt) who will purify the world of mischief and corruption, and fill it with justice as it was filled with injustice." He said to him: " O Da'bal, the Imam after me will be Muhammad, after Muhammad his son Ali, after Ali his son Hassan, and after Hassan his son, the Evidence, the Awaited Qa'im" in his Occultation whose obedience is mandatory at the time of his appearance." (8)

These reports are weak traditions both in their chains of transmission and in their contents, for they cannot withstand academic investigation. We will discuss them in the chapter on the critique of the traditional (special) evidence, and its unsoundness will be established subsequently.

B – THE MAHDISM PHENOMENON IN ISLAMIC HISTORY

The several and frequent claims of being the Mahdi, extending to tens of such claims here and there, are what further confirm the ambiguity associated with the identity of the Mahdi among the members of the Prophet's household. This even led to each sect or group to have more than one Mahdi. This phenomenon shows that the term 'Mahdi' because synonymous with revolt, freedom and justice and its re-emergence again in corrupt circumstances shows that the Muslim world is degenerating, day in day out.

Most of the stories of Mahdism in the early Islamic generations were connected to revolutionary political movements that confront injustice and persecution and gathered around one of the leaders, mostly being one of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). When such movements fail and the Imam dies before he emerges (as a political leader), or is killed in the confrontation, or hides in obscure circumstances, his followers used to differ. Among them will be those who will submit to and accept the reality, and start searching for another new Imam and a new occasion for revolt. Some of them will not submit to the reality and will not accept defeat, and will be quick at believing in hearsays, which have it that, the revolting Imam has fled and has hidden himself and has gone into occultation. It is usually the simple-minded people who fixed their hopes on a person, exaggerating his attributes. So it becomes very difficult for them to change their minds, for that will mean a failure and total breakdown.

THE MAHDISM OF IMAM ALI

The supporters of Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (peace be upon him) who revolted against the Umayyad rule, and fought in the Battle of the Camel and fought Muawiyah in the Battle of Siffin,

who also confronted the Kharijites in Nahrawan, were pinning their hopes in the rule of the Imam, during which they will enjoy justice and equity. Their hope in the Imam was very high. That was why some of them were shocked by the news of his assassination. They could not believe the news of his (untimely) death.

Shiite historians like Nubakhti, Ash'ari al-Qummi, Al-Kashi were saying that: 'A group of Shiites did not accept the death of the Imam and they claimed that: 'Ali was not killed nor did he die, and that he will never be killed, nor will he die, till he chases the Arabs with his stick and fill the earth with justice and equity, as it has been filled with injustice and tyranny.' (9)

We can interpret this statement of the Mahdism of Imam Ali and his Occultation, as due to shock of the death, its sudden nature, as well as very high hope...This was because those people, were living very far away from Kufah could not bear the news of the Martyrdom of the Imam, after their hope in him, to establish universal justice on earth. This led to the acceptance of ideas contrary to the reality.

THE MAHDISM OF IBN HANAFIYYAH

After the massacre of Karbala Shiite fury gathered around the leadership of Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah, the brother of Imam Hussain for the purpose of revenge and retaliation for the martyrs of Karbala... When Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah died in obscure circumstances in the year 81 A.H, a group of his supporters –Kissanites-said that: 'He did not die and that he was staying in the Ridwi mountains between Makkah and Madinah. They believed that he was the Imam, the Awaited Mahdi who was predicted by the Prophet (peace be upon him), who will fill the earth with justice and equity. (10).

Sayyid Murtada Alam al-Huda interpreted the claims of the Kissanites on the Mahdism of Ibn Hanafiyyah as perplexity, which made them resort to it. (11)

Perhaps perplexity and confusion was their lot, because they have pinned their hopes on Ibn Hanafiyyah to wrestle power from the Umayyads' hands. They were disappointed when the desired goal was not achieved. His followers from among the Kissanite Shiites were forced to invent a doctrine on his Mahdism, and the perpetuation of his life and his occultation in their attempt to preserve the hope ignited in their hearts. Moreso that the Shiites in those days were aware of any predetermined particular personality as the 'Awaited Mahdi'.

THE MAHDISM OF ABU HASHIM

Support for the belief in the Mahdism of Ibn Hanafiyyah declined with the emergence of Abu Hashim Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Hannafiyyah, as a new leader for the Shiites towards the close of the first century of Hijrah. Great hopes were pinned on him for attaining what his father was

unable to attain... The crisis was repeated when Abu Hashim died without appearing (as the Mahdi)... This led to the belief of some Shiites in his hiding and occultation and saying that he was the Awaited Mahdi, and that he is alive and has not died. (12)

As for those who admitted the death of Abu Hashim, they preserved their hopes in their hearts, by waiting for the emergence of one of the children of Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah in the future. They did not specify any particular person. (13)

THE MAHDISM OF AL-TAYYAR

The Shiites who formed the main opposition group to the Umayyad rule, immediately gathered around a new leader from the Ahl al-Bayt, i.e. Abdullah bin Mu'awiyah bin Abdullah bin Jafar Al-Tayyar, who succeeded in establishing a Shiite state in Isfahan at the end of the Umayyad rule. He was, however defeated later, and was killed in obscure circumstances. Some of the Shiites could not bear the news of the collapse of the Shiite state. They claimed that Al-Tayyar was alive and has not died, and that he was staying in the Mountains of Isfahan, that he would never die till he hands over the reins of affairs to a man from Banu Hashim, of the children of Ali and Fatimahh. (14)

CONFINING MAHDISM TO THE FATIMIDE FAMILY

The Shiite theory of Mahdism was not confined to the Fatimide family in the beginning, as the Kissanites-representing a stage in the development of Shiism-limited it to the household of Ali (Alawites), seeing possible in Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah and his children: or they limited it to them, but it extended to others outside their fold, like Abdullah bin Mu'awiyah bin Abdullah bin Ja'far al-Tayyar. It later developed and became confined only to the Fatimide family, in the children of Hassan and Hussain. At that time it was not confined to anyone of the two households. Due to this a group of Shiites believed in the Mahdism of Zayd bin Ali. And another group believed in the Mahdism of Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Hassan bin Hassan (Dhu al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah).

As Zayd was killed after little while, his followers went to Dhu al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah, Abdullah bin Hassan, his father has named him Muhammad and predicted at the time of his birth that he will be the promised Mahdi, who was foretold by the Prophet (peace be upon him) and has said on him regarding him, "His name is like my name, and the name of his father is like the name of my father", as was popularly known in that period.

THE MAHDISM OF DHU AL-NAFS AL-ZAKIYYAH

Dhu al-Nafs Al-Zakiyyah hoped to rebel against the Umayyad rule, when the children of Hashim paid their allegiance to him at Abwa. Among them were, Ibrahim al-Imam, Saffah and Mansur. But it did not take long that the Abbasid rule was established, so those who paid allegiance to him deserted him, and another group of Shiites flocked around him. He left Madinah in the year 145 A.H and took over Makkah and Yemen, but he was killed after few months. Due to this a section of his followers were shocked and could not bear the news of the defeat, and did not believe the murder of the Mahdi, whose appearance they were waiting since very long time. They said that: 'He was alive and did not die, nor was he killed, but was staying on the Mount of 'Ilmiyyah'-between Makkah and Najd-till the time he will reappear. They held onto the Hadith of the prophet (peace be upon him), which says: "The Qa'im (Mahdi's) name is like my name and his father's name is like my father's." (15)

As there were no explicit, specific and well-known Hadiths, which explain the identity of the Mahdi, the followers of Dhu al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah have explained the Hadiths of Mahdism as referring to him, and have interpreted the Hadiths related to (the Mahdi) to also refer to him. They might have even fabricated some reports and attributed them to the Prophet (peace be upon him), in order to augment their theory and to support their Awaited Leader.

THE MAHDISM OF BAQIR

Some reports state that: 'A section of the Shiites believed in the Mahdism of Imam Muhammad bin Ali Baqir (peace be upon him) depending on a report which says that: 'The prophet (peace be upon him) said to Jabir bin Abdullah al-Ansari: " You will meet him, so say my 'Salam' to him." (16)

Kulayni says in 'Al-Kafi': 'Imam Baqir used to confine to his companions that the emergence (of the Mahdi) and his appearance were imminent, and he advised them to maintain it as a secret. Some of them abandon all they were doing waiting for the time of the blowing of (the siren)'. (17)

THE MAHDISM OF SADIQ

After the death of Imam Baqir and the defeat of Muhammad bin Abdullah Dhu al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah, and the triumph of the Abbasids, and the popularity of Imam Jafar bin Muhammad Sadiq (peace be upon him), reports became widespread on his Mahdism. (18)

Nubakhti reports that: 'Some Shiites have reported from Imam Sadiq that he said: "If you see my head rolling to you from the mountain, you should not believe that, for I am your 'Sahib' (Mahdi)." And he also said: "If anyone informs you that he nursed me, washed my body (after death) and shrouded me, do not believe him, I am your companion (Sahib) and the companion of the sword." (19) Hence a section of the supporters of Imam Sadiq denied admitting that he died. They also said that: "He is the Awaited Mahdi and that he is alive and did not die." This group was known as the 'Tawussites –attributed to Ajlan bin Tawus. (20) Among these group was Aban bin Uthman Al-Ahmar considered by al-Kashi to be one of the men of consensus (Ijma'), i.e. one of the closest people to Imam Sadiq. (21)

THE MAHDISM OF ISMA'IL

From the above, it seems that the various Mahdism theories were born with time and in different circumstances. They were more of hopes than dependence on clear and sound Hadiths. The belief in the Occultation evolves when an Imam dies before his appearance (as the Mahdi). The Shiites have never ever agreed on the Mahdism of a particular Imam previously, and it has been the same from the beginning. At the time when some of them believed in the Mahdism of Imam Sadiq, some of them were fixing their hopes on the Mahdism of his son Isma'il. When Isma'il died during the lifetime of his father Imam Sadiq, his supporters denied his death, and invented a doctrine in his Occultation. They interpreted his funeral and burial by Imam Sadiq openly, as a drama aimed at concealing the fact that Isma'il has fled and has hid himself, as a preparation for his reappearance in the future! (22)

It is well known that the Shiites differed after the death of Imam Sadiq into six (6) different sects. The Isma'ilites believed in the life of Ismail, as well as his Imamate, Mahdism and occultation. Some of them after their despair in his Mahdism turned to accept the Mahdism of his son Muhammad. They then transferred Mahdism to the children of Isma'il till the appearance of the last of them, at the close of the third (3rd) century when he established the Fatimide rule in North Africa.

THE MAHDISM OF DIBAJ

Muhammad bin Jafar Sadiq (Al-Dibaj) who appeared in Makkah in the year 200 A.H., claimed that he was the Awaited Mahdi. He declared himself as the Caliph of the Muslims and took oath of allegiance from them, and was called the Leader of the faithful. (23)

Therefore, we can say that the theory of Mahdism meant, emergence, revolt,... and was never specific in a particular person. The theory of occultation used to evolve whenever any awaited Imam fails or dies without achieving his goals.

THE MAHDISM OF MUHAMMAD BIN ABDULLAH AL-AFTAH

The only exceptional case, which was contrary to the above-mentioned rule at that time, was the theory of the Mahdism of 'Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Jafar Sadiq'. This person was not born at all and did not exist. Some of the Fathite Shiites invented a story of his existence in secret, after the death of his father Abdullah Aftah, who was believed by those Shiites to be the Imam after his father Sadiq. Those Shiites were shocked when Aftah died without an issue to succeed him in the Imamate. They believed in the necessity of the continuation of the Imamate in the children and the grand children (of the Imam), i.e. being inherited vertically. Due to this they could not shift to the belief in the Imamate of the brother of Abdullah, Musa bin Jafar. They therefore invented the idea of the existence of a son for him in secret: They said that: "His name corresponds to the famous Prophetic Hadith: His name is my name, the name of his father is the name of my father." (24)

It cannot be ruled out that some people of vested interest and hypocrites from among the companions of the Imams might have fabricated this illusory story of the myth of the awaited Mahdi-Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Sadiq, so as to benefit from that financially, and claim being his deputy and receive money on his behalf. The stories on the existence of that illusory Mahdi were widespread in Yemen. And that he will appear, and fill the earth with justice and equity after it has filled with injustice and tyranny.

THE MAHDISM OF KADHIM

With the Abbasid revolution and its deviation from its goals of reform and the spread of corruption in their rule, it was only natural that their opponents gathered around any great personality from the Ahl al-Bayt, i.e. Imam Musa bin Ja'far Kadhimi (peace be upon him) who was a symbol of piety, knowledge and devotion. The hope of his emergence and appearance (as the Mahdi) grew. In this way there were a lot of reports on the Mahdism of Imam Kadhimi, and the belief that he was the Qa'im from the family of Muhammad (peace be upon him). Some of the Shiites went on reporting some narrations from Sadiq that: "It was inevitable that my son is the Qa'im (Mahdi) of this Ummah, and the Owner of the sword". And "Musa is the Qa'im, and this is inevitable from Allah". "Even if his head will roll to you from the mountains you should not believe, for he is the Qa'im" "The name of the Qa'im is the iron (knife) of the barber." "As if I am seeing the black banner

with a green patch on it lowered over the head of this person sitting” and the rest of such reports that lack consensus!

When Rashid arrested Imam Kadhimi, many of the Shiites considered that as the first or minor Occultation. When he killed him and threw his pure body on the bridge in Baghdad, they refused accepting that or believing it, and they said, ‘It was an Abbasid drama’ and they said also that: ‘Imam Kadhimi has gone into his second Occultation, and that he fled from the prison and he was alive and did not and will not die till he controls the East and the West of the world, and fill the whole of it with justice as it was filled with injustice, and that he was the Qa’im and the Mahdi.’ (25)

Most of the children of the Imam claimed the same thing, so also most of his close companions like Al-Mufaddal bin Umar, Dawud al-Ruqa, Daris al-Kinani, Abu Basir, A’yun bin Abdul Rahman bin A’yun, Hadid al-Sabati and Hassan bin Qiyyama al-Sirafi. Ali bin Abi Hamza wrote a book on the occultation. Similarly Ali bin Umar al-A’raj wrote another book on that.

Those Shiites were known as the Waqifites i.e. those who accepted the Imamate of Imam Kadhimi, and refused faith in Ali bin Musa Rida.

Dawud al-Ruqa hesitated in admitting the Imamate of Rida, based on those agreed reports, which limited Mahdism to Kadhimi and say that: “The seventh of us, is our Qa’im.” Imam Rida said to him, “The hope of the rising (appearance) of Kadhimi depends on the will of Allah and it was not inevitable.” (26)

The Waqifites continued in their faith in the Mahdism and the occultation of Imam Kadhimi for a long time. But they decreased in number with the passage of time, till the death of the theory and the extinction of those who believe in it, especially when Imam Rida confirmed the death of his father and said to them: “Allah’s evidence on His creation will be only through the Imam that is alive, and is well-known. Glory be to Allah. The Messenger of Allah died and Musa bin Ja’far did not die? Yes, by Allah he has died, and his wealth has been distributed and his slavegirls have been married.” He suspected those who claim that he did not die, of lying and said: “They are disbelievers in what Allah the Exalted has revealed on Muhammad (peace be upon him). If Allah exalted were to extend the lifespan of anyone due to the need of the creation to him, He would have extended the lifespan of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him).” (27)

THE MAHDISM OF MUHAMMAD BIN QASIM

In the beginning of the third (3rd) century of Hijrah, in the year 219 A.H and during the days of the Caliphate of Mu’tasim, an Alawite rebellion took place in ‘Taliqan’ under the leadership of Muhammad bin Qasim. Mu’tasim however defeated and arrested him and carried him to Baghdad,

detaining him in his place. He was able to run away and fled. The people differed on his affairs. Some of them said that: 'He has died or fled'. Some of the Shiites said that: 'He is alive and he will reappear and he is the Mahdi of this Ummah'. (28)

THE MAHDISM OF YAHYA BIN UMAR

Another Alawite Imam, namely, Yahya bin Umar marched out from Kufah in the days of Musta'in. He directed Hussain bin Isma'il to him, and he killed him. But some of his companions did not accept the news that he was defeated, and said that: 'He was not killed, he only hid himself, and went into occultation, and that he was the Mahdi and the Qa'im, who will reappear another time'. (29)

THE MAHDISM OF MUHAMMAD BIN ALI HADI AND ASKARI

The Imamate Shiites differed among themselves in the middle of the third century of Hijrah on the identity of the Awaited Imam Mahdi. A section of them said that: He is Muhammad bin Ali Hadi, who died suddenly in Dajil. They believed in his occultation, like that of Isma'il bin Ja'far. They did not believe his death. Another section of them claimed that Imam Hassan Askari was the Mahdi. A third section of them believed in the existence and the Mahdism of a son for him (Askari) in secret, namely, Imam Muhammad bin Hassan Askari. Yet others said that: 'He (the Mahdi) is not specified, and that he will be one of the members of the Ahl al- Bayt, not by appointment, and that he will be born and will appear in future.' (30)

THE MAHDISM OF AN UNKNOWN QA'IM

At last, two Shiite historians contemporaneous to the death of Imam Askari mentioned that: 'A sect from the followers of the Imam said: "Hassan bin Ali has died, a confirmed death, and the

Imamate has ceased till the time when Allah will raise a Qa'im from the family of Muhammad (peace be upon him) that have passed away. If He wills, He raises another person other than him, but from his forefathers. That is because the raising of the Qa'im and the appearance of the Mahdi is inevitable. The appearance of the Mahdi is on Allah. The reports came on the basis of that, so also sound narrations and a consensus of the Ummah. It is not possible to invalidate that. This is due to the fact that, the death of Hassan bin Ali has been confirmed, as his not leaving an issue has also been confirmed. So the Imamate has ceased, as he has no issue. Since it is not possible except in the children (of the Imam). It cannot go to the uncle or cousin or brother after Hassan and Hussain. The Imamate has thus ceased till the raising of the Qa'im from among them. If he appears and emerges (as the Mahdi) (his affairs) will continue till the Hour of judgment. (31)

All these several and conflicting claims of Mahdism movements express and show the ambiguity and vagueness of the concept of Imam Mahdi, and the likelihood of his being any of the Imams from the Ahl al-Bayt. That is the one who will appear with the sword, and establish the state and rule of truth. All the Shiite sects believed that he is from this Hashimite family, or that house of Alawites or Fatimide or Hassanite or Hussainite or Musawite house. And that he is this or that person. If the identity of the Mahdi has been determined before, , since the time of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) or the time of the previous eleven Imams, the Muslims would not have differed, nor would the Shiites, nor the Imamate Shiites, not the supporters of Imam Hassan Askari in determining the identity of the Mahdi. Some of them would not have believed 'Imam Hassan Askari' himself to be the Mahdi.

We conclude from all these that: The identity of the Mahdi was vague and not specific or determined in the time of Ahl al-Bayt. That the belief of his being the son of Hassan Askari evolved after supposing his existence in secret, and in an attempt to explain his absence from sight, and the non announcement of his birth by his father, on the basis of considering occultation as (an essential) attribute of the Mahdi.

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CHAPTER TWO:

PHILOSOPHICAL FACTORS FOR THE INCEPTION OF MAHDISM THEORY

If we undertake a historical study of what happened to the Imamate Shiites after the death of Imam Hassan Askari in the year 260 A.H., and have a cursory look on the rational evidence presented by the group which believe in the existence of a hidden son for the Imam, and that he was the Imam after him and the Awaited Mahdi, if we do this, we would discover the theoretical and doctrinal crisis experienced by that group of the Imamate Shiites. That crisis led the Imamate being inherited vertically and non-permissibility of its transfer to a brother or cousin. This forced the group to either compromise this condition or accepting the cessation of the Imamate after the death of Askari without a successor, as was apparent from his life, or to suppose the existence of a son for him in secret, despite his non-declaration of that, or announcing it. It led them also to interpret this ambiguity and concealment by means of taqiyyah (insinuation) and fear of the authorities, despite the non-existence of any pointers that warrant that.

The historical narration accepted and transmitted by all historians and theologians from the Twelver- Imam Shiites says: Imam Askari died without leaving behind an apparent son, and he left a will (regarding his wealth) in favour of his mother called 'Hadith'. This is what led his brother Ja'far bin Ali to claim the Imamate after him and to call the Imamate Shiites to follow him as a successor to him. Similarly, they followed Imam Musa bin Ja'far after the death of his elder brother Abdullah Aftah, who became the Imam for a period of time after Imam Sadiq. He did not have any issue, through whom the Imamate should continue.

Nubakhti, Ash'ari al-Qummi and Mufid say that: 'Most of the Imamate Shiites answered the call of Ja'far and were near about agreeing on his Imamate'. (1)

That was because the common populace of the Shiites did not know anyone among the children of Hadi, except Ja'far, nor did they see any son for Imam Askari. This is what the report of Abu Al-Adyan al-Basri, the messenger of Imam Askari to the people of the cities, - being the last person to bid farewell to the Imam - confirms. He says: 'Askari did not tell him the name of his successor, but he gave him some signs for recognizing and identifying him'. He also says that: 'He returned to Samirra'i on the day Imam Askari died. He saw then Ja'far and the general Shiite populace surrounding him, on their forefront was Uthman bin Sa'id Al-Umari. The Shiites were saying their condolences and at the same time congratulating him (Ja'far). Abu Al-'Adyan also (according to the report) went to him and gave his condolence and congratulated him as one of the people. As he said: 'A delegation of the Shiites from Qum came on that day to Samirra'i and asked of Imam Hassan they were informed of his death. They then said: To whom should we give our condolence? The people pointed to Ja'far. They said 'Salam' to him and passed their condolence and congratulated him. (2)

This is what the report of Sinan Al-Mausili also confirms. The report mentions the arrival of a delegation under the leadership of Abu Abbas Muhammad bin Ja'far al-Himyari al-Qummi in Samirra'i after the death of Imam Askari. They inquired about him and his heir. The response of the people to them was that his heir was Ja'far bin Ali. It would not be enough that his Imamate was rejected only on the basis of his lack of knowledge of the Unseen. (3)

Based on that, Ja'far sent to the people of Qum, which was a Shiite stronghold then –calling them to himself, and informing them that he is the leader (Qayyim) after his brother. The people of Qum gathered around their Sheikh—Ahmad bin Ishaq and discussed the issue. They in the end decided to send a delegation to him to discuss with him and to ask him some questions, they used to ask his forefathers before and so as to confirm his claim. (This is) as was said by Khusaibi in 'Al-Hidaya al-Kubra' (4) and Saduq in 'Ikmal al-Din' (5) and Tabrisi in 'Al-Ihtijaj', (6) and Sadr in Al-Ghaybah al-Sughra. (7)

This shows that the people of Qum did not know of the existence of a son for Imam Askari, nor did they know the identity of the new Imam previously, and there was nothing to prevent them from accepting the Imamate of Ja'far bin Ali. That is, they were not strictly conforming to the rule of vertical inheritance in the Imamate, and they saw the Imamate of others as permissible.

The main obstacle that prevented some of the Shiites from accepting the Imamate of Ja'far was the doubtful old principle that rejects the Imamate of two brothers after Hassan and Hussain. This was raised by the Qum delegation before Ja'far bin Ali, in the course of the dialogue. He responded: "Allah has changed his will (bada) in that" as Khusaibi says in 'Al-Hidayah al-Kubra'. (8)

Some of the narrations transmitted by Saduq and Tusi say that: 'The Qum delegation demanded from Ja'far, to disclose the amount of money, they were carrying and the various owners, miraculously, as his brother Askari used to do. Ja'far rejected that demand and claimed and suspected the delegation of lying on his brother. He denied attributing the knowledge of the Unseen to him. (9)

Some reports attempt to suspect Ja'far of disobedience (fisq), drinking wine ignorance, and disregarding prayer. (10) That was in order to invalidate his claim to the Imamate. The general Shiites did not consider such allegations, and did not raise the question of knowledge of the Unseen. They did give their condolence to him and congratulated him on the Imamate.

The main problem with some of them was the issue of having two brothers as Imams. Tusi has capitalized on it in the process of arguing against the Imamate of Ja'far, and the theory that Hassan had a son. He claimed that there is no difference on this point among the Imamate Shiites. (11)

This problem did explode in the ranks of Imamate Shiites for the first time after the death of Imam Abdullah Aftah bin Ja'far Sadiq, whose Imamate was agreed by the Shiite fuqaha and scholars, but he died without a son. This led the Imamate Shiites to a crisis and divided them into three sects. Among them were those who held to the principle-- 'the Imamate not being in two brothers' and were forced to assume the existence of an illusory son for Abdullah, whose name is said to be Muhammad and he is hidden, but will appear in the future. Among them were those who went

beyond that principle and permitted for himself to shift (the Imamate) to the brother, if the previous Imam has no son. They, as a result of this, accepted the Imamate of Musa bin Ja'far after his brother Abdullah Aftah. Among them were those who change their minds as regards the Imamate of Aftah, and concluded from his not having a son, that he was not an Imam. Therefore they stroke his name off the roll of Imams.

This same problem was repeated again when Imam Hassan Askari died without an issue. This led the Imamate Shiites to differ on the issue of succession, that eventually led to the emergence of a number of sects: Among them were those who accepted both the brothers as Imams, and so they believed in the Imamate of Ja'far bin Ali, after his brother Hassan; among them were those who had second thought on the Imamate of Askari and said that: "Believing in the Imamate of Hassan was a mistake and an error, it is incumbent on us to change our minds on it, to the belief in the Imamate of Ja'far. As Hassan has died without an issue, it became clear and valid to us that he wrongly claimed Imamate. This is because an Imam, according to our consensus will not die till he leaves behind a clear successor, who is well-known, to whom he will pass his will and establish him in the position of the Imamate. Imamate is not valid in two brothers, after Hassan and Hussain.... The true Imam is inevitably Ja'far, through the will of his father to him." Nubakhti in 'Firaq al-Shi'ah (12) and Ash'ari in 'Al-Maqalat wa al-Firaq' (13) also reported similar narrations.

Among them were those who insisted on the Imamate of Hassan, and held onto that principle of the invalidity of the Imamate of two brothers (after Hassan and Hussain). This group turned into different sects: Of them were those who believed in the Mahdism and occultation of Askari; among them were those who claimed his return to life after death; among them were those who believed in the interval (between Imam and Imam); among them were those who were confused and could not take a position and they said: It has not been confirmed to us that Hassan had a son (a successor) whose affairs were hidden to us. We will not take any stand, and hold onto the first (Imam) till the time when another one become clear to us. We would hold onto this, and we will not deny or dispute the Imamate of Abu Muhammad or his death. We would not say that he returned to life after his death, as we cannot be sure of the Imamate of the children of someone, other than him. There was no conflict of opinion among the Shiites on that. The Imamate of an Imam cannot be established except through a clear will from his father to him. (14)

Among them were those who found themselves forced to assume the existence of a hidden son for Imam Askari and to claim that he is the Imam after him and the Awaited Mahdi? They interpreted his apparent nomination by his father during his lifetime, and the lack of a will to him and non-appearance after him and his occultation. They interpreted all this in terms of taqiyyah (insinuation) and the fear of the enemies.

The main motive behind this statement is the strict adherence to the rule of vertical inheritance and the non-permissibility of the Imamate being transferred to two brothers after Hassan and Hussain. Despite the fact that it is a very weak statement, and not all the Shiites have agreed on it at that time, contrary to what was claimed by Tusi two hundred years afterwards, the theologians who adhered to it, made it the cornerstone in the process of arguing for the existence of a son for Imam Hassan Askari. They have woven it and the remaining philosophical issues that necessitate infallibility of the Imam or necessitate text in the Ahl al-Bayt, into strong evidence!

We have demonstrated in the first chapter, statements of the theologians and historians who argued rationally on the existence and birth of Muhammad bin Hassan Askari. Their evidence depends on the theory of infallibility, text and vertical inheritance of the Imamate. In reality however, their evidence depends entirely on the last principle, i.e. vertical inheritance, that is because many of the Fathite Imamate Shiites, who agree with them on the belief in infallibility and text and who believe also in the Imamate of Hassan Askari, did not find themselves forced into believing in the existence of a son for him in hiding, contrary to what is apparent. They believed instead, in the Imamate of his brother Ja'far bin Ali Hadi, because they did not believe strongly in the necessity of the Imamate being inherited vertically only, and the invalidity of two brothers being Imams.

Hence the rational evidence is more of a philosophical assumption, free of any historical reality. That was evident from the dependence of some theologians on the tradition of Rida which says: "The owner of this affair will not die till he sees his son, who will succeed him) after him", in order to establish the existence of the son of Imam Askari, as Sheikh Tusi has reported in 'Al-Ghaybah.' (15)

Despite the possibility of arguing with the same tradition to refute the Imamate of Askari, as a section of the Shiites have done, those who changed their minds as regards his Imamate and held onto the non-existence of a son for his brother, in whom the Imamate will continue, as evidence on the invalidity of his Imamate, just as the Musawite Shiites changed their minds in the middle of the second century of Hijrah regarding the Imamate of Abdullah Aftah, because he did not have any issue, and they stroke his name off the list of the Imams. (16) That sect of the Shiites considered the change of mind on the Imamate of Askari and believing in that of Ja'far directly after his father Hadi, lighter than assuming an illusory son for Askari.

What is strange is that Sayyid Murtada 'Alam al-Huda suspects those who believe in the existence of a son for Imam Abdullah Aftah, of resorting, to fabricating an illusory personality, essentially, so as to emerge from perplexity and an impasse. (17) He however, practiced the same thing in the process of assuming the existence of a son for Hassan Askari, necessarily, so as to emerge from perplexity and confusion that has swept the Imamate Shiites in the middle of the third century of Hijrah.

It is necessary after this to point to the fact that, claiming the process of theoretical argument on the existence of a son for Hassan Askari as rational argument is an oversight and a metaphor, otherwise, it is far from being a rational argument, as it depends on a number of transmitted texts, some of them were reported by single reporters that need to be established as regards the meanings and the chains of their narration, like the statement: 'Vertical inheritance and the impermissibility of the transfer of the Imamate to two brothers after Hassan and Hussain'. Due to this Sheikh Saduq in his 'Ikmal al-Din' admitted and said: "The claim of the occultation of Sahib al-Zaman is based on the statement on the Imamate of his fore-fathers. And this is a legal and not a purely rational argument. (18)

This means that discussing any premise, of the long premises of the rational argument, like the necessity of infallibility in the Imam; the necessity of text on him from Allah; establishment of

the Imamate in the members of the Prophet's household and its being confined to the house of Hussain; and the way of its transfer from one Imam to another; and the claims of the remaining Imams, who claimed the Imamate and Mahdism, like Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah and his son, Abu Hashim, Zayd bin Ali, Muhammad bin Abdullah Dhu al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah, Isma'il bin Ja'far and his children, Abdullah Aftah, and Muhammad bin Ali Hadi and so on, of minute details in the Divine Imamate theory from the beginning to the end, till the death of Imam Hassan Askari, discussing any of such premises will obstruct the way leading to the assumption of the existence of a son for Hassan Askari.

Due to this, establishing the existence of Imam Mahdi Muhammad bin Hassan Askari in a rational manner for the rest of the people, or the rest of the Muslims, or for the remaining Shiite sects, or even for the rest of the Imamate sects that did not agree with the principle of vertical inheritance, became difficult or impossible. Because of this the Twelver-Imam theologians avoided discussing with other people, establishing the personality of the son of Hassan, except after the acceptance of the previous long traditional premises and believing in each and every one of them.

Abdul Rahman bin Qubbah al-Razi has said in refuting Ali bin Ahmad bin Bashshar: "Do not discuss a secondary (Far) issue the primary principle of which has not been established. This man (the son of Hassan), the existence of whom you deny, his right would only be established after his father. There is no meaning in abandoning the perusal of the right of his father and going onto discussing with you his existence. If the right of his father has been established, and that has necessarily been established at the same time, as you have admitted. If the right of his father has been invalidated, the matter will be as you were saying, and we have invalidated it. (19)

Sayyid Murtada has said: The occultation is a branch of the fundamental principles; if they are valid the discussion on occultation will be simple and clear as it rests on them. And if (such principles) are invalid the discussion on the occultation will be difficult and impossible. (20)

Even though accepting the Imamate of Hassan Askari will not necessarily lead to the acceptance of the existence of a son for him, the belief in that is based on the necessity of the continuation of the divine Imamate till the day of Resurrection, and on the necessity of inheriting it vertically. And this is just an illusory assumption and conjecture not based on knowledge.

It is for this reason that Sheikh Nasir Makarim al-Shirazi says in his book: 'Al-Mahdi: Al-Thaurah al-Kubra: "The philosophical argument can establish universal general issues, but it cannot pinpoint on a man outside and establish his existence." (21)

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CHAPTER THREE:

CRITIQUE OF THE TRADITIONAL (TEXTUAL) EVIDENCE

We do not need to discuss the Quranic citations or the numerous Hadiths that discuss the Mahdi or the Qa'im without specifying the identity of the person. This is because the aim of our study is not the total denial of the appearance of Mahdi in the future. It is rather aimed at saying that a person called Muhammad bin Hassan Askari has not been born and is yet to exist. Consequently, the verses or the Hadiths would not establish the birth of such a man, or his existence despite the possibility of discussing the import of the glorious verses on the subject.

As for the narrations on the occultation (al-Ghaybah) and the occult, they are not discussing any particular occult (person). And they did not mention the name of Muhammad bin Hassan Askari, as they did not point to his special occultation. So it cannot stand as evidence on the occultation of the Hujjah (Mahdi), son of Hassan, for he has not yet been born nor did he go into occultation. These narrations are not discussing a matter before it takes place, so that that can be seen as miraculous and evidence on the validity of the occultation, as Sheikh Saduq has said.

There is, in such narrations nothing that maintains what the theologians claimed. This is because it did not contain the mention of anything before it happens, as Sheikh Tusi has stated. There was no any predetermined anterior mention (of this) from the Knower of the Unseen. That is because the narrations existed before, and they mention some other people who were existing in reality, and Mahdism was claimed for them; they disappeared in the valleys, on mountains and in prisons, like Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah, Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Hassan (Dhu al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah) and Imam Musa Kadhim (peace be upon him). It so happened that during their absence their followers became scattered and divided and confused. Their supporters fabricated such narrations from reality and for specific purposes, especially the Waqifite Shiites, those who strongly believe in the Mahdism of Imam Kadhim. But when Rashid arrested him, they claimed that he was in occultation. When the Imam died they refused to acknowledge his death, but rather claimed that he fled from the prison, and had gone in to his major Occultation, during which he will not be seen. They considered the period of his detention, as the minor Occultation, the major occultation was longer than the minor one, as it extends to infinity. The Waqifites did borrow the traditions on the occultation from the Mahdism movements before them, and applied them on Imam Kadhim.

If we may pause on the narration mentioned by Nu'mani on the occultation, in which he says: "If no other tradition has been reported except this one, it would suffice." We would find that it mentions the death, murder and disappearance of a previously well-known and existing Imam. While he (Nu'mani) needs to establish the existence of Imam Muhammad bin Hassan Askari from the onset, so that he will be able to attribute such acts to him subsequently.

The theologians (Mutakallimun) were in the beginning (the third century of Hijrah), attempting to establish the validity of the assumption of the existence of the twelfth Imam son of Hassan, and were not discussing the 'Mahdi and Mahdism', as they were in need of establishing first, the throne and then the one to sit on it. But the crisis that they faced after their claim of the existence of the 'son of Hassan' was: the non-appearance of the Imam to perform the duties of Imamate. This led them to search in the old Shiite heritage, like that of Kissanites and Waqifites, so also seeking for anyway out of the crisis and the perplexity. They found in the old traditions on Mahdism, the best solution for coming out of the crisis of non-appearance, as well as new evidence on establishing the assumption of the existence of the son of Hassan at the same time.

Due to this the theory that was concerned with establishing the existence of the twelfth Imam developed into the belief in Mahdism. The discussion revolved around the existence of the Imam Mahdi, the Hujjah, son Hassan Askari', due to the vacuum left by the absence and non-appearance (of the Imam). The conclusion from this is that the person assumed to be the Imam who cannot be seen, is the Mahdi, who will go into occultation, and that the cause of his non-appearance was the occultation!

Even if it is valid to argue on the basis of such reports for the Mahdism of well-known earlier Imams, those who disappeared in the prisons or in the valleys or other parts of the world, it would not be possible to argue on the basis of it for the validity of the assumption on the existence of the son of Hassan. That was because the companions of Imam Hassan Askari, and who differed a lot on the issue doubted his existence. The process of arguing on the basis of it for the 'Mahdism of son of Hassan' needed first to establish his existence and prove it, before anything is said on his Imamate, Madism, occultation, and e.t.c.

The argument on the basis of occultation in order to prove the existence (of the son of Hassan) without establishing that in the beginning, resembles the argument to prove the existence of water in a container by saying: "Water has no smell and no color, and we cannot smell anything nor see any color in the container, there fore, there is water inside it."

If that is not possible except after the establishment of some kind of fluid in the container then we cannot say that: 'This fluid has neither color nor smell, therefore it is water'. The process of establishing the existence of the son of Hassan similarly, will require firstly to prove his existence, Imamate and Mahdism, then his occultation can be established, not the other way round i.e. when the unknown and the non-existing and occultation were taken as evidence to prove the existence, Imamate and Mahdism of a person still being searched for and being discussed.

Therefore, it is not, in truth, possible to argue on the basis of the general ambiguous and weak traditions of the occultation' in order to establish the existence of 'Imam Muhammad bin Hassan Askari.

Some theorists on occultation have attempted to argue on the basis of a tradition of the two occultations, the minor and the major, to establish the validity of the 'theory of the existence of

the son of Hassan'. The report on the two occultations itself however is not historically proved. There is no evidence on it, except the subject of 'special deputation', which was claimed by some personalities. It has not been established from them at that time. The Shiites that maintained the existence of the son of Hassan differ among themselves on the validity of the claim of this person or that, of being a special deputy, having been claimed by about twenty (20) persons, most of them were among the extremists. From this the limit separating the two occultations, the minor and the major was an illusory limit, not established historically. It is to be noted that the argument on the basis of the two occultations was started by Nu'mani in the middle of the fourth century of Hijrah, after the expiry of the period of 'Special deputies'. None of the preceding writers on 'occultation' point to it. They only pointed to one occultation.

Sayyid Murtada Alam al-Huda and Sheikh Tusi did admit, while discussing the causes of occultation, that it is necessary to first investigate the subject of the existence and Imamate of the son of Hassan Askari' before discussing the occultation and its causes. (1)

They said: " For anyone who doubts the Imamate of the son of Hassan, it is necessary to discuss with him the text on his Imamate, and to exert efforts in establishing it. It is not possible to discuss the cause of the occultation if doubts remain regarding it (the Imamate). This is because it is not right to discuss the branch (secondary issue) until after perfectly establishing the (primary) principles." (2)

THE EVIDENCE OF THE TWELVER-IMAM SHIITES

This late evidence the theologians started employing after more than half a century of confusion and perplexity, i.e. in the fourth century of Hijrah. There was no trace of it in the third century among the Imamate Shiites, as Sheikh Ali bin Babawaih Saduq did not mention it in his book: 'Al-Imamah wa al-Tabsirah min al-Hayrah', just as Nubakhti did not point to it in 'Firaq al-Shi'ah', nor did Sa'ad bin Abdullah Ash'ari al-Qummi in his 'al-Maqalat wa al-Firaq'. That is because the Twelver-Imam theory came to the doctrine of the Imamate in the fourth century, after it has been extended to the end to time, without any limit regarding the number, similar to the case with the Isma'ilites and Zaydites, because of its being parallel to the theory of Shura and an alternative to it. So as long as there are Muslims who need a state and an Imam, it was forbidden for them to resort to Shura and elections as the Imamate theory maintains. It is inevitable that Allah appoints for them an infallible Imam through traditions and texts. Then why should the number be limited to twelve only?

For this reason, the Imamate Shiites did not mention any specific number of Imams, and even those who believe in the existence of Imam Muhammad bin Hassan Askari, did not maintain that he was the seal (last) of the Imams. We see Nubakhti saying in his book-'Firaq al-Shi'ah': "The Imamate will continue in the progeny of the twelfth Imam till the day of Resurrection." (See the reference: The sect that believe in the existence of a son for Askari).

Many reports mentioned by Saffar in 'Basair al-Darajat' Kulayni in 'Al-Kafi', Himyari in 'Qurb al-Isnad', Iyashi in his Tafsir, Mufid in 'Al-Irshad' and Hur al-Amili in 'Ithbat al-Huda' and so on and so forth, pointed that, since the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the Imams did not know of any predetermined list of Imams, nor did they know of their Imamate or the Imamate of the succeeding Imams after them except just before their death, talkless of the Shiites or the Imamate Shiites themselves, who used to get confused and differ among themselves after the death of any Imam. They used to seek from every Imam to appoint the succeeding Imam after him, and to name him in clear terms, so as not to die without knowing the new Imam.

Saffar reports in 'Basa'ir al-Darajat' (3) in the chapter on, 'The Imams know the ones to whom they give their will (of the Imamate) before their death through what Allah bestowed on them (of knowledge)', a tradition from Imam Sadiq in which he says: "No scholar dies until Allah shows him the one to whom he will give the will". Kulayni in 'Al-Kafi' reported it also. (4) He also reports from him (peace be upon him): "The Imam will not die till he knows the one after him and then he offers him his will." This shows that the Imams themselves have no knowledge of the names of those to succeed them or the existence of a predetermined list with their names. Saffar, Saduq and Kulayni have gone beyond this and they reported from Abu Abdullah who said: "The succeeding Imam knows of his Imamate and takes over in the last minute of the life of the last Imam." (5)

As a result of that many questions are raised regarding the life of Ahl al-Bayt, namely: 'How does the Imam know of his Imamate, if his father died away from him in another city?' 'How can he know that he is the Imam if he gave his will to a group, or if he did not give a will at all?' 'How can the people know the Imam, especially if brothers claim the Imamate, and each one of them claim to have received the will, as it has happened to a number of Imams historically?'

Kulayni reported a tradition from one of the Alawites, namely 'Isa bin Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Umar bin Ali bin Abi Talib, who said I said to Abu Abdullah:

- ❖ "If something-may Allah not show that to me---happened (death) to you, whom should I emulate?" He said: He pointed to his son Musa. I said:
- ❖ " If something happened to Musa, whom should I emulate? He said:
- ❖ " His son". I then said:
- ❖ "If something happened to his son, and left an elder brother and a small son, whom should I emulate?" He replied:
- ❖ "His son' He then added, " In this manner perpetually." I said:
- ❖ "If I did not know him nor do I know his place?" He said:
- ❖ "You will say: 'O Allah I give my loyalty to any of your evidences (Imams) remaining from the children of the past Imam', that will suffice you, Allah willing." (6)

This tradition shows that there was no any predetermined list of names of the Imams, and the lack of knowledge of the Alawite and Imamate Shiite like 'Isa bin Abdullah' of that (list), and the possibility of his being perplexed and ignorant further confirms this. If the list exists before, the Imam would have pointed to it.

Due to the ambiguity of the identity of the subsequent Imams in the sight of the majority Shiites and Imamate among them, they used to always ask the Imams on the necessary steps to be taken when one of the Imams dies. Kulayni and Ibn Babawaih and Iyashi transmit a tradition from Yaqub bin Shu'aib from Abu Abdullah, who said: 'I said to him:

- ❖ "If something happen to the Imam, what should the people do?" He said:
- ❖ "They will be like the saying of Allah: "Of every troop of them, a party only should go forth, that they (who are left behind) may get instructions in religion, and that they may warn their people when they return to them, so that they may beware (of evil). I said:
- ❖ "What is their position?" He said:
- ❖ "They will be excused as long as they were searching. Those who were waiting for them will be excused, till the return of their people." (7)

There is yet another similar narration from Zurarah bin A'yun who experienced this problem, and he died just before the death of Imam Sadiq, he was not aware of the new Imam. So he placed the Quran on his chest and said: "O Allah, I testify that I affirm whom this Book states to be the Imam". (8)

Zurarah was one of the greatest students of the two Imams Baqir and Sadiq, but he did not know the one to succeed Imam Sadiq. He therefore sent his son 'Ubaidullah to Madinah, so as to find out the new Imam. He (Zurarah) died before the return of his son to him, without his knowing who was going to be the Imam! (9)

A number of reports mentioned by Kulayni in 'Al-Kafi' (10), Mufid in 'Al-Irshad' (11) and Tusi, in 'Al-Ghaybah' (12) state that: "Imam Hadi gave his will in the beginning to his son Sayyid Muhammad, but he died during the lifetime of his father. So the Imam gave his will to Imam Hassan and said to him: "Allah has changed His will (bada) regarding Muhammad as He changed His will regarding Isma'il. O my son, thank Allah as He has decreed on you a matter, or a favor."

If the reports on a previously prepared list of the names of twelve Imams were sound and existed before, why didn't the Imamate Shiites, who differed and were confused by the death of Imam Hassan Askari (without an issue), know of it? The Imamate scholars of Hadith and historians also did not point to it in the third century of Hijrah?

The Twelver-Imam Theory was never stable in the Imamate Shiites minds till the middle of the fourth century of Hijrah when Sheikh Muhammad bin Ali Saduq expressed his doubt on

limiting the Imams to only twelve (12). He said: "We are only bound religiously to confess the existence of twelve Imams, and also to believe what the twelfth will say after him." (13)

Al-Kaf'ami in 'Al-Misbah' has reported from Imam Rida (peace be upon him) the following dua (supplication) on the Sahib al-Zaman: "O Allah bless the rulers of his time and the Imams after him." (14)

Saduq has reported a number of traditions on the likelihood of the extension of the Imamate beyond twelve and not limiting it to that. Among such narrations was a report from Imam Amir Al-Muminin (peace be upon him) on the confusion of the situation after the Qa'im and that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) has taken a covenant from him: 'Not to tell anyone of that except Hassan and Hussain, and that he said: "Do not ask me of what will happen after that, as my beloved has taken a covenant from me, that I will not tell anyone except my family."' (15)

Tusi has reported in Al-Ghaybah that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said to Ali: "O Ali there would be twelve Imams after me, and after them, there will be twelve Mahdis. You are O Ali the first of the twelve Imams.... Then there will come after him, twelve Mahdis." (16)

When the idea of limiting the number of Imams evolved, after the claim on the existence and occultation of Muhammad bin Hassan Askari, the Imamate Shiites were about to differ among themselves on limiting their number to either twelve or thirteen, as some reports emerged at that time saying: The number of the Imams is thirteen. Kulayni has reported it in 'Al-Kafi'. (17) It was found in the book that appeared at that time, which was attributed to Salim bin Qays al-Hilali. One of these reports says that: 'The Prophet has said to Amir al-Muminin (Ali)': "You and twelve of you children are Imams of the truth." This is what made Hibatullah bin Ahmad bin Muhammad al-Katib, the grandson of Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Uthman al-Umari, who was involved in theology (Kalam), to write a book on the Imamate, and mention in it that the Imams are thirteen and add to the well known list the name of Zayd bin Ali, as Al-Najashi said in his 'Rijal'.

The Shiite historian, Mas'udi (d. 345 A.H) has mentioned in his 'Al-Tanbih wa al-Ishraf': "The origin of the statement limiting the number of the Imams to twelve, was what Salim bin Qays al-Hilali mentioned in his book." (18)

The book of Salim has appeared in the beginning of the fourth century of Hijrah, and it contained the list of names of the twelve Imams, on which he said: "It was known since the time of the Messenger of Allah, and that he was the one who announced it before. The emergence of this book has led to the inception of the sect of Twelver-Imam in the fourth century of Hijrah. The reporters then started fabricating reports bit by bit. Kulayni did not mention in 'Al-Kafi' except 17 reports. Saduq then came fifty years after him, to increase it to little over thirty reports. Then came his student, Khazzaz to make it 200 reports.

MUFID CONSIDERED THE BOOK OF SALIM AS WEAK

Kulayni, Nu'mani and Saduq depended in their statement on the Twelver-Imam theory, on the book of Salim, which was described by Nu'mani as one of the essential sources referred to and relied upon by the Shiites. The common populace among the Shiites at that time, however, were doubting the fabrication and concoction of the book of Salim, and that was due to its being reported through 'Muhammad bin Ali al-Sirafi Abu Saminah', the well known liar and 'Ahmad bin Hilal al-'Ibrata'i' the cursed extremist. Abu al-Ghada'iri has said: "Our people used to say: 'Salim is an unknown person, not mentioned (by scholars). The book was fabricated, there is no doubt about that, and there are signs to confirm what we said.'" (19)

Sheikh Mufid considered the book of Salim as weak and said: "It is not reliable, and acting on most part of it, is not permissible. It contained (a lot of) concoctions and deception. It is better for a religious person to keep away from acting on all that is in it. The most of it is unreliable, and its reports should not be emulated. One should go to the scholars, regarding the traditions contained in it, so as to be cleared on the right therein, and the wrong." (Mufid: 'Awa'il al - Maqalat', and 'Sharh' l'tiqadat al-Saduq'). (20)

Mufid criticized Saduq for transmitting the book and dependence on it, and attributed that to the method of Saduq in reporting. He said of him: "He is treading the path of the scholars of Hadith, who act on the apparent meanings of words and avoid other considerations. This opinion harms its owner in his religion, and standing by it prevents him from having insight in religion." (21)

Hence the Zaydites opposed the Imamate Shiites, saying: "The report that indicate that the Imams are twelve is a statement initiated by the Imamate Shiites lately, and they produced in that regard many false traditions." They supported their view by the divisions among the Shiites, after the death of every Imam, which resulted in a number of sects; and their lack of knowledge of the (next) Imam after the (present) Imam; and the occurrence of 'bada' (change of will) in the case of Isma'il and Muhammad bin Ali; and the claim of Abdullah Aftah on the Imamate and the response of the Shiites to that; and their subsequent perplexity after his tribulation; their lack of knowledge on Kadhim till the time he called them to himself; the death of the jurist Zurarah bin A'yun without the knowledge of the Imam. (22)

Saduq has transmitted their allegations against the Imamate Shiism, in inventing the Twelver-Imam theory of late. However, he did not deny the allegation, nor refute it. He only justified that by saying: "The Imamate Shiites did not say that: "The entire Shiites including Zurarah, knew the twelve Imams." When he became aware of the position of Zurarah and the impossibility of his not knowing any tradition of this sort, being the greatest of the disciples of the two Imams, Baqir and Sadiq, he changed his mind on what he said. He therefore, saw the likelihood of Zurarah's knowledge of the tradition and his hiding it, due to Taqiyyah. He later abandoned this probability and said, 'Kadhim has sought from his Lord to bestow him (knowledge) due to his ignorance of the Imam, because anyone who doubts him (the Imam) is not in the fold of Allah's religion.'" (23)

This contradicts the claim of Khazzaz in 'Kifayat al-Athar' and Tusi in 'Al-Ghaybah' on the popularity of the traditions on twelve Imams, related through the Shiites, and establishes that it

is not in any way authentic in the earlier generation, especially in the eras of the Imams from Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) as it was not having any impact or influence. Moreover that Tusi did not mention the classical Shiite books, which he claimed to have discussed the 'twelve Imam' theory. Khazzaz had tried to avoid discussing the later allegation of fabrication. He attempted to deny the allegation of fabrication on the part of the companions and their followers and the Ahl al-Bayt (24). The allegation was not made against the companions and the Ahl al-bayt, but only against some later reporters, who fabricated the book of Salim in the period of confusion and perplexity, like 'Abu Saminah' 'Al-Ibrata'i' and 'Ali bin Ibrahim al-Qummi'.

WHERE IS THE IMPORT (OF THE EVIDENCE)?

That is it. The majority of the traditions that limit the number of Imams to twelve, so also all the traditions reported in the Sunni sources in particular did not mention the names of the Imams or Caliphs or Princes in details. The Sunni traditions did not limit them to twelve, it only pointed to the occurrence of 'Haraj'-killings after the twelfth Caliph, as was in the report of Tusi from Jabir bin Samrah. (25) It also discussed the triumph of religion or of the followers of the religion, till the advent of twelve Caliphs. (26)

If we accept the theory of Fathite Imamate Shiites, who did not put as a condition, vertical inheritance of the Imamate, Imam Hassan Askari will be the twelfth Imam after admitting the Imamate of Abdullah Aftah bin Sadiq, and after accepting the Imamate of Zayd bin Ali believed to be the Imam by a section of Imamate Shiites.

Therefore arguing on the basis of the traditions of Twelver-Imam Shiites which are general, vague and weak traditions, without the existence of any intellectual evidence on the birth of Muhammad bin Hassan Askari is a kind of assumption, conjecture and guess, devoid of any precise intellectual argument.

THERE MUST BE A LIVING IMAM WHO IS WELLKNOWN AND MANIFEST!

As for the traditional evidence, which asserts the necessity of the existence of Imam in every era, and the nonpermissibility of the world being devoid of evidence (Imam), it is the evidence that invalidates itself by itself, otherwise what is the meaning of Imam and evidence? (Hujjah)? What is the benefit of both? Is it not for the guidance of mankind and for administering the society and the implementation of Shariah injunctions? How is it possible for the occult Imam-- on the assumption that he exists-- to perform all that? ... If the occult Imam performs the duty of Imamate and Hujjah why did the jurists feel the need for the Imam and Hujjah in the period of occultation?

If the objective of his existence were the running of the affairs of the Universe as some of the extremists would say, Allah has a lot of angels to do that.

Imam Ali bin Musa Rida (peace be upon him) has refuted the Waqifites, who believed in the occultation of his father (Imam Kadhim) that: ' There must be a living and manifest Imam well known and referred to by the people!' He said: "No evidence from Allah will be established on the creation, except by a living and known Imam." So also: "Anyone who dies without an Imam, has died a Jahili (ignorance) death.A living known Imam". The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) has said: "Anyone who died without (allegiance to an) Imam, whom he listens to and obey, has died a Jahili death."

Imam Rida said to one of the Waqifites: "Anyone who dies without a manifest living Imam, has died a Jahili death." He asked him seeking elucidation, and emphasizing on the word 'a living Imam'. He confirmed to him again, 'a living Imam'.

The origin of this idea is the first intellectual premise for the Imamate theory, the import of which is: 'The necessity of the existence of a general Imam (Leader) in the world, and the impossibility of the society remaining without a government, any kind of government and any Imam.....If it has developed to the necessity of an infallible Imam appointed by Allah, insisting on the issue and the concluding from it: 'The existence of 'Muhammad bin Hassan Askari' and the continuation of his life to this day', this is also another kind of assumption, conjecture and guess. Where is the Imam the teacher and the guide, who implements the injunctions of Allah, who preserves the Shari'ah against any addition or deletion or distortion?

Even if such traditions are sound, the Imam can be another person..... If what is meant is not a general sense of Imam (leader) or a general sense of Hujjah (evidence), the one learned in the injunctions of religion.

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CHAPTER FOUR:

CRITIQUE OF THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

A-CONSISTENCY OF THE REPORTS

I believe that the ordinary reader does not need to suffer the hardship of studying the knowledge of transmitting Hadith and its texts in order to assess those 'historical' reports transmitted on the birth of 'Imam Muhammad bin Hassan Askari', or need to be a specialist in history. For the authors who reported those traditions in their works, have attempted to save themselves from the allegation of depending on such weak reports. They said in the beginning: We will prove the existence of the twelfth Imam based on acceptable theoretical, philosophical and rational means. We do not need historical reports we only mention them, so as to support and strengthen them. They also took off their shoulders the burden of intellectual discussions on those reports, ascertaining their chains of narration and investigating their text.

I also believe that they cite (such traditions) similar to the case of a drowning person, who tries to hold to anything (to save himself), otherwise, they knew more than anyone, of the frailty and weakness of such reports. If any other sect were to cite such kind of reports on the existence of their Imams or other persons, they would have knocked and scorned and looked down on their intellect and would have accused them of being illogical and of being clearly irrational. Just as the theologians of the Twelver- Imam sect have done in refuting a group of Fathite Imamate Shiites who claimed the existence of a son in secret for Imam Abdullah Aftah bin Ja'far Sadiq. They said his name was Muhammad, and that he was the Awaited Mahdi. They also claimed that he was born secretly and is hidden in Yemen. That is based on the principle of the necessity of perpetuating the Imamate in the children and grand children, and the non-permissibility of its being transferred to two brothers after Hassan and Hussain. The Twelver-Imam Shiites said of that sect (Fathite Shiites): 'They have fabricated the existence of an illusory son, who is non-existent, that is the Mahdi, Imam Muhammad bin Abdullah Aftah as a result of their reaching an impasse'.

Anyone who studies the vast Shiites intellectual heritage in the fields of the science of Hadith (both on chains of narration and text), will notice the concern of scholars-since the first centuries-as regards reporters and the study of Hadith and its efforts at sifting scrutinization and its distinguishing the sound from the weak (Hadiths). He will also recognize the extent of importance which the Shiites scholars have given to constructing legal opinions on sound intellectual foundations, and their non-acceptance of constructing matters of religion on illusions, conjectures, hearsays and myths.

The neutral observer however, is mesmerized by the scholars neglect, throughout the history of the study of historical narrations regarding the establishment of the birth and existence of the twelfth Imam Muhammad bin Hassan Askari, their dependence in that, on a rule with no authority from Allah, which says: "The weak traditions are strengthened by other (weak) traditions" and their considering the issue of birth and existence, as has been finally accepted by all, and is in no need of review and discussion. This is what led them to repeat

those reports without reflection and intellection, exactly as the extremist reporters were doing.

It is well-known that the early reporters of Hadith used to concoct reports without investigations or criticisms. They developed later and started distinguishing between reports. The Usuli movement came into inception then, and it classified Hadiths into Sahih (sound), Hassan (good), Qawiy (strong) and Da'if (weak). Except that this development did not cover the historical narrations on the subject of the birth of the twelfth Imam, as we see Sheikh Tusi who wrote 'Al-Fihrist' and 'Al-Rijal' in the science of reporters, narrating such reports from people he considered weak in his books. That was due to the need for such narrations in constructing a particular theological theory.

A great scholar like Sayyid Murtada Askari spent long years of his life, in order to establish, in two or three volumes, that Abdullah bin Saba was an illusory myth fabricated by some historians, so as to accuse the Shiites of taking the theory of Wasiyyah (will) in the Imamate from the Israelites. Sayyid Askari worked very hard exerting a lot of efforts and he studied tens of historical books, in order to refute the story of the existence of Abdullah bin Saba and his role in Shiite thought. He did not however, put even one percent or even one in thousand of that effort in order to investigate the truth of the existence of the twelfth Imam, or to study such reports that discuss his birth. He did pause on that in any of his books. He was the one who discovered the existence of one hundred and fifty companions who fabricate traditions.

After all this, it is possible for me to say that there is no issue which was so much neglected and abandoned in Shiite heritage like the issue of the 'existence of Imam Mahdi' and his birth. There is no issue beyond research and ijtihad, except that issue. When I started studying it coincidentally, or rather by the will of Allah (Tawfiq), and I presented the result of my research to the scholars, jurists and thinkers for more than five years, I found that many of them were using escape tactics, not to read my study, and are vexed by mere investigation of it, as if it attempts to prevent him from engrossing in a beautiful dream. I have confirmed the existence of a doctrinal and psychological situation that prevents extending academic researches and criticism to such historical reports.

Some of the elites from among the common populace take interest in the attacks of the doctrines of other sects, as well as looking down on its weak and fabricating men and their irrational reports. But when the affair is related to an aspect of his sect, he will close his eyes and will claim ignorance and lack of expertise, and he would refuse employing little of his reason, and would prefer to continue on what he has inherited, of superstitions and myths.

Before we discuss such historical reports in both the chains of narration and the text, it is desirable to point that these reports were not known in the period called 'the minor occultation', as those writers who believe in the existence of the twelfth Imam did not transmit them. They wrote on that in the second half of the third century of Hijrah. Like Nubakhti in 'Firq al-Shiah', Sa'ad bin Abdullah Ash'ari al-Qummi in 'Al-Maqalat wa al-Firq', Ali bin Babawaih Saduq in 'Al-Imamah wa al-Tabsirah min al-Hayrah', Muhammad bin Abi Zaynab Nu'mani in 'Al-ghaybah' and even Sheikh Kulayni, who tried to collect any story or report on the subject. He mentioned the story of the Indian man 'Sa'id bin Abi Ghanim' who traveled from Kashmir in search of Imam Mahdi. But he did not mention most of the stories that were recorded after him by Sheikh Muhammad bin Ali Saduq in, 'Ikmal al-Din', or Sheikh Mufid in 'Al-Irshad' and 'Al-Fusul' or Sheikh Tusi in 'Al-Ghaybah'.

It is well known that Sheikh Saduq Junior came about one hundred (100) years after the death of Imam Askari. Sheikh Tusi died two centuries after that date. Despite that, both of them went on recording whatever 'mursal' stories and hearsays they heard related to the birth of 'Muhammad bin Hassan Askari', or transmitting from a number of extremists, weak reporters, unknown persons and fabricators.

As we have seen, those 'historical evidences are seriously inconsistent within themselves, beginning with the identity of the assumed mother of 'Muhammad bin Hassan', coming to the date of his birth and finally the minute details. As there were differences related to the name of his mother, whether she was the slave girl, Narjis or Susan or Saqil or Khamt or Raihanah or Mahksh or she was a free woman called Maryam daughter of Zayd Al-Alawiyyah. Or that she was a slave girl who delivered in the house of one of the sisters of Imam Hadi. Or that she was bought from the slave market in Baghdad.

Those reports also differed as regards specifying the date of birth on the day, month and year. They differed in turn, on his age at the time of the death of his father, between two and eight years.

They also differed on the manner of pregnancy, whether in the womb or by the side, and as regards the delivery whether it was through the vagina or the thigh!

The reports also differed on his complexion between being white or brownish. The reports were inconsistent on the manner of his growth, between the normal and well-known way, and the claim that at the time of his father's death he was a small child, and between the abnormal ways. In this, some said the growth was fast, growing in a day like the yearly growth; or that his growth in one day is like the weekly growth and his growth in one week is like the growth of one month, and his growth in one month is like the growth during one year. Based on this then he seems to be an adult of about seventy (70) years, in such a way that his aunt Hakimah could not recognize him and was surprised of the instruction of Imam Hassan to her to sit in front of him.

The reports were also inconsistent regarding the concealment of his affairs. A report said that Hakimah bade farewell to Imam Hassan, after the birth of his son and went back to her house. But when she desired to see him after three (3) days, she came back and searched for him in his room, but did not find any trace of him, nor heard any mention of him. She did not want to ask and went to Abu Muhammad. He started by saying to her. "He is O aunty, in the canopy of Allah, He preserves and conceals him, till the time He wishes. When Allah takes me away and takes my soul, and you saw my supporters scattered, you should tell the reliable among them (this). Let him be a secret for you, but concealed to them, as Allah causes his loved one to disappear away from His creations and veils him from His servants, so that no one sees him till Jibril (peace be upon him) presents to (the Mahdi) his horse." The other report said that Hakimah was seeing the son of Hassan every forty (40) days. She never ceased seeing him till when he became an adult.

Some reports said that: 'Imam Hassan Askari announced the birth of his son and sent to some of his companions for a ram to be slaughtered (for the occasion); and that he presented (his son) to a number of his companions; that he wrote to Ahmad bin Ishaq al-Qummi on that ...that he brought out his son and presented him to him, when he visited him in 'Surr Man Ra'a'; that a number of servants and handmaids also saw him coincidentally or intentionally, sitting in his room or walking in the house'.

The reports were inconsistent as they say that he fears being arrested by the authorities; the reports also say that he was at complete peace to the extent of praying on the dead body of his father, and of receiving delegations, in his father's house.

The reports also differed on the knowledge of the companions and servants of the existence of the son of Imam Hassan Askari. Some of them said that: The servants and the close companions knew of his existence and had seen him. Some of them said that 'they were astounded when he came out to pray on his father's body, and his nonrecognition except by means of a number of signs.

The reports also differed on his intellectual maturity. Some of them said: 'He prostrated at the moment of his delivery and he uttered the two testimonies and he also sought Allah's blessing and peace on his fore fathers, one by one, and he also recited some verses from the great Quran. Some of them said that he was a small child playing with golden permanganate and preventing his father from writing what he wants to write.

THE REPORT OF HAKIMAH

The narration of Saduq from Hakimah says that: Narjis had no signs of pregnancy on her and she did not even know of it. She was surprised when Hakimah told her that: She will deliver that same night. She said, " O my mistress, I do not see anything of that sort! Hakimah herself was surprised when Imam Hassan told her of the birth of the child for him in the fifteenth night of Sha'aban and she went on asking herself: 'Who will be his mother? And when he said to her 'Narjis' she said: 'May I be your ransom, there is no any sign on her, 'when it was close to dawn and no any sign appeared on her, doubt started creeping into the heart of Hakimah.

The report says that Hakimah started reciting the Quran on Narjis, and the embryo inside her responded, reciting what she was reciting. He said Salam to her also, which frightened her. Despite this the report says that it took Hakimah a long time before witnessing the delivery. In another narration Narjis was taken away from Hakimah and she did not see her, as if a veil was placed between them. This astonished her and caused her to shout and resort to Abu Muhammad.

The report of Saduq does not mention what Tusi said in one of his narrations that Hakimah found written on the arm of the child the verse: "Truth has come and falsehood has vanished. Surely, falsehood is ever bound to vanish." despite the fact that Saduq came much before Tusi. Yet only Saduq mentioned the birds that were circulating round the head of the baby, as well as the statement of Hassan to one of the birds: 'Take him and protect him, and return him to us after every forty days.'

Saduq and Tusi did agree on the speech of the child and his saying the two testimonies, and seeking blessing on the Prophet and the previous Imams, as well as Salam

on his mother and father. They did agree also that the child disappeared and hid himself after that, and that his aunt could not find any trace of him, nor hear any mention of him.

All these things are strange and were not known from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) or from any of earlier Imams (peace be upon them). They are part of the statements of extremists and their myths. It has no relation with Ja'farite or Imamate Shiites, who believed in the text as a means of recognizing a new Imam. They did not mention any of such extraordinary and strange matters.

Allah the Exalted has mentioned the story of the speech of Prophet Isa (peace be upon him) in the cradle, in front of the people in a miraculous manner, to dispel the allegation of fornication against his mother, and to establish his miraculous birth. There is no any need for a miracle and strange things accompanying the birth of the 'twelfth Imam'.

If the miracle was inevitable, it must take place before the people, so as to know it and believe in its message. It is not possible that it takes place in secret where no one can know of it. What then is the benefit?

Essentially, doubt was expressed as regards the birth of a son for Hassan Askari. If there was any need for a miracle or a strange thing to happen, it would have happened in order to confirmed the birth itself...or in protecting the child from any harm, for example. This did not happen.

It should be noticed that all the reports that mentioned his birth secretly and his disappearance on the wings of the birds that were the angels, did not point to the fear from the authorities, or that he was the Awaited Mahdi. If he were really born, it would have been better that Imam Askari announce his birth, in a way that he will be seen by the entire people and they will confirm his existence and succession of his father. If the Abbasid authorities were to attempt arresting him or killing him, he will hide by the power of Allah and in a miraculous manner.

The report attributed to Hakimah says that 'Imam Hassan Askari was informed miraculously of the sex of the child, and that he will be a male. As it says: He was aware miraculously of what his sister Hakimah was thinking when she doubted his statement. He said to her: "Don't be in a haste, O my aunt." It also points to the knowledge of Imam Hassan of the closeness of his death, and he said to his sister: "Very soon you will not find me." Likewise the knowledge of Imam Mahdi of the unseen and his replying the questions of Hakimah before she asks were also indicated in it. All these things contradict the doctrine of Ja'farite and Imamate Shiites and conform to the belief of the extremists and those who deviated from the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), as there was a popular tradition with the Shiites from their Imams—which instructs the discarding away of any report that contradicts the Quran.

Therefore all these questions, ambiguities and shortcomings weaken the narration attributed to Hakimah, and it invalidates it from the status of evidence and of reliability, and it brings it closer to being a myth reported by extremists and fanatics.

THE REPORT OF ABU AL-ADYAN AL-BASRI

It is the report narrated exclusively by Saduq in 'Ikma al -Din' from a known fabricator, an illusory man whose name he did not mention, nor that of his father or his clan: 'Abu al-Adyan al-Basri'. He said he was one of the servants of the Imam and the deliverer of his messages and his envoy to the cities and collector of funds for him. Despite all that, no one knows him, and no any other historian pointed to his existence.

Despite the high status given to him by Saduq, the reporter 'Abu al-Adyan' admits that Imam Askari did not inform him of the identity of the Imam after him. As he also admitted his ignorance of the existence of a son for the Imam. He also says that most of the Shiites including Aqid and Al-Samman (Uthman bin Sa'id) and Al-Basri himself gave their condolence to Ja'far bin Ali and congratulated him, while not knowing who was the Imam after Askari. They wanted to pray behind Ja'far.

The report rests squarely on one element: Imam's knowledge of the Unseen, as the reporter says in the beginning that: 'Imam Hassan has said to him: Go to the cities, for you will be away for fifteen (15) days, and you will enter 'Surr Man Ra'a' on the fifteenth. Your will hear the wailer in my house and you will find me at the birth place.' All this was from the knowledge of the Unseen, which no one possesses except Allah, Who says in the Glorious Quran: "No person knows what he will earn tomorrow, and no person knows in what land he will die. "

The report says that: 'The coming unknown Imam will seek from Al-Basri, without any knowledge of him before, responses to the letters of Imam Askari, as the report says that: He will mention what is in Hamyan (a kind of bag). That a child came out after the shrouding of Askari and pushed Ja'far (aside) and he then prayed on his father: Then he said to al-Basri: "Bring the replies of the letters with you". He then submitted them to him. At that moment, a delegation of Shiites of Qum and the mountains came and asked for Imam Askari, and they were told of his death. They then said: "To whom do we give our condolence?" The people pointed to Ja'far bin Ali. They passed their Salam to him, gave their condolences and congratulated him.'

Al-Basri did not explain why he did not guide them to the new Imam? Why didn't the leaders of the Shiites who prayed—through illusion--behind a child, point to him, if that has really happened?

Anyway, the reporter 'Abu al-Adyan al-Basri' says that: "The delegation from Qum did not oppose the appointment of Ja'far, as the Imam after his brother. They did not argue on the necessity of vertical inheritance. They only said that they have letters and money, and they demanded from Ja'far to inform them, wherefrom the letters and the money came. Ja'far stood up and dusted his clothes and was saying: "Do you want us to know the knowledge of the Unseen?" The servant went out? And he said: "You have the letter of so and so, so and so, and there is in the Hamyan one thousand and ten dinars. They gave him the letters and the money and said: "The one who directed you to take these, is the Imam. Saduq did not say in this narration that the delegation from Qum knew the identity of the Imam, or that they saw and met him. What he said however in another narration, was that: 'the members of the delegation went inside with the servant to the Imam, the Qaim who was sitting on a bed, as if he was a piece of moon. He was wearing green clothes. The delegation said 'Salam' to him, and he responded, then he said: "The sum total of money is so-and-so, so-and-so carried by so-and-so, and so on. He continued to the extent of describing all of it. He then described the members of the delegation, their clothes and the animals with them.'

Even though the matter is not very difficult, as it is possible for any person to sit before the delegation and knew of their situation, or that he agrees with the leader of the delegation, and he tells the remaining members the details...The report of Abu al-Adyan al-Basri considers that to be of the knowledge of the Unseen, and that it constitutes an evidence on the Imamate of the man (or the child), sitting on the bed, without telling us how the delegation came to know the identity of the man. Has he told them that he is the son of Imam Askari or not?

As is clear, this report mentions nothing as regards fear or surrounding insecurity for the Shiites and the new Imam. It only said that the Abbasid Caliph Al-Mu'tamid stood by the side of the delegation in their dispute with Jafar. He did send guards to protect them. It (the report) also forgets another report that says that the Abbasid authorities took over the house of Imam Askari, and searched it, in order to find whether he has a son.

If the Imam was really frightened and was trying to hide himself, why should he go out and pray on his father? Why did he sit in his house, receiving delegations within the range of Abbasids spies?

What is known and established historically was that Abu 'Isa al-Mutawakkil was the one who prayed on the body of Imam Askari and the people of the capital of the Caliphate, 'Surr Man Ra'a' performed his funeral, as the gates of the city were entirely closed. There was a lot of wailings and cries.

It seems that this report started in Qum in a later stage, so as to establish the existence of a successor for Imam Askari. That was before it developed and became the foundation of the Mahdism theory of that successor. This is because the issue of establishing a successor is different from and prior to the issue of establishing the attributes of Mahdism on him. The people were initially concerned with the establishment of the first issue. The second issue (of Mahdism) did not evolve except in a late date after many years. Based on the situation of the occultation and the non-existence of the Imam, some of them considered that as one of the signs of the Mahdi. Therefore they said he is the Awaited Mahdi.

From here, the fabricators of the story did not take into account the fear of the authorities and the police search for him, that was why they mentioned the coming out of the child to pray on his father, and his receiving delegations in his house.

We have mentioned besides that report, two other narrations, namely, that of Isma'il bin Ali Nubakhti who says that: 'He visited Imam Askari moments before his death. The Imam demanded from his servant (Aqid) to bring his son. When he brought him to him, he said to him: "Have glad tidings my son you are the 'Sahib al-Zaman' (the Mahdi)." The other narration of a group of companions who said that Imam Askari showed them his son and said to them: "This is your Imam after me and my successor on you...except that you will not see him after this day."

The first report contradicts the report of Abu al-Adyan al-Basri, in which he says that: 'Aqid was ignorant of the existence of a son for Imam Askari and due to this he requested his brother Ja'far to pray on him, while the first report says that Aqid brought the child to his father in front of Isma'il bin Ali Nubakhti.

It is worth noting that Nubakhti himself did not point to this story. He says that: He knew of the existence of a son for Hassan through rational argument, as Saduq narrated from him in his book ('Ikmal al-Din p. 92) from the book of Nubakhti-'Al-Tanbih'.

The second report also contradicts the report of Abu al-Adyan al-Basri, which denies the great companion's knowledge of the existence of a son for Hassan Askari, including Al-Samman (Uthman bin Sa'id al-Umari) and 'Hajiz al-Wisha', who asked Jafar: "Who was the child, so that we can establish the evidence on him?" He said: "By Allah I have never seen him and I do not know him!"

It is well known that Al-Samman al-Umari and Hajiz al-Wisha' did claim to be special deputies of the Hujjah, son of Hassan after that. So when did they see him? When did he appoint them as his deputies?

There is yet another point: That is the second narration says that: 'Imam Askari said to his companions after he has showed them his son: "You will not see him again after this day." Then how did he appear again after that to pray on the body of his father and to receive delegations?

All these reports contradict the first narration, which was reported from Hakimah in which Imam Askari said that: 'She will not see him after the day of his birth,' in such a way that every report contradicts the previous one.

This shows that the group which invented the idea of the existence of a son for Imam Askari contrary to the reality, and based on weak philosophical statements, like the non possibility of shifting the Imamate to two brothers after Hassan and Hussain, and the necessity of continuation of the Imamate in the children and grand children of (the Imam), this group went on fabricating stories, reports and myths on the birth of a son for Imam Hassan and the meeting with him (witnessing him) during the lifetime of his father and his being seen, at the time of his father's death.

As the reports were inconsistent and do not express the truth and were fabricated by different people, they appeared contradictory and different in the details, in such a way that each one backs the personal ideas of its fabricators. Likewise these reports included miracles and strange things, under the pretext that the Imams know the Unseen. This claim clearly contradicts the Glorious Quran, which declares: "(He Alone is) the All Knower of the 'Unseen', and He reveals to none His Unseen. Except to a Messenger whom He has chosen." These reports also attempted to interpret the perplexing occultation, which contradicts the theory of divine Imamate and divine benevolence.

The apparent historical narration says that: Imam Hassan Askari has never pointed to the existence of a son for him. And when he felt the approach of death, he called Qadi Ibn Abi al-Shawarib, and he passed his will on his wealth and other belongings to his mother (Hadith), in front of the Qadi. His housemaid called Narjis did claimed that she was pregnant from him, in the hope of her being set free, as she would be 'Umm Walad' and she will be freed from the share of her son... It may be that her monthly period delayed somewhat, and she thought that she was pregnant. The witness (Qadi) did delay the distribution of the inheritance, and took great care of the maid, shifting her to the wives of the Caliph Mu'tamid and instructed them to observe her i.e confirming her claim of being pregnant. But then nothing appeared from her.

Some of the Imamate Shiites who did not believe in the Imamate of Ja'far bin Ali were faced with a crisis of ideas and confusion. Some of them therefore held onto the 'Chaff' of Narjis and said that: 'She delivered after that'. Some of them said that: 'She did not give birth, and no one saw that. ...But she will deliver when Allah wills and permits, and that the embryo remained miraculously for a long time in her womb'...Some of them said that: 'She claimed being pregnant to conceal her son, which she delivered before that'...others claimed other similar things.

Those who claimed the existence of the son before went on spreading hearsays and myths secretly, to mislead the simpleminded and to benefit financially from that. The earlier scholars did not believe such hearsays.

Sheikh Saduq then came after one hundred years, and Sheikh Tusi after two hundred years, to record such stories and myths without ascertaining their sources and chains of narration, and without relying on them very much. They were aware of their weakness and said in the beginning that: We depend on the rational philosophical evidence in order to establish the existence of the son of Hassan. We bring those stories in order to strengthen (the rational evidence) only.... Some historians of narrations came after them, and they transmitted such mythical stories, as indebatable historical facts.

Even though Allah, the Exalted demands from us to accept the clear narration denying the existence of a son for Imam Hassan Askari, and that He will not take us to account, nor ask us to accept the secret esoteric report which is contradictory and covered by superstitions and myths ...we are not, after this and after the discovery of what it entails of serious weakness, we are not in need of studying the chains of narration, or the reporters who transmitted such reports. Therefore we, despite the above, would focus on their chains of narration in order to see from where those historians got them, so as to increase our knowledge and certitude on the weakness of these reports, which have played a great role in the construction of Shiite political thought throughout history.

B: EVALUATING THE CHAINS OF TRANSMISSION OF THE HISTORICAL REPORTS.

Before we go into the study of the chains (of narration) of such historical narrations, it is necessary to point that, some scholars who wrote on Imam Mahdi, have neglected such reports, and did not depend on them, as Shahid Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Sadr did in his 'Bahth Haula al-Mahdi', but he rather relied on the claims of the four deputies, who claimed special deputation and representation from 'Imam Mahdi'. He ruled out that those people would tell lie in their claims of meeting the Imam. He constructed on the basis of that, the validity of the existence and birth of Imam Mahdi. He went on after that, interpreting the philosophy of the occultation, and establishing the possibility of a long life!

There are those who relied on the great scholars who reported those narrations like Sheikh Kulayni, Saduq, Tusi and Mufid, and then ruled out the possibility of their lying or their depending on weak reporters and reports.

Despite the existence of cases of fraud and manipulations in both the ancient and the modern works, I could not find anyone who studies those books and confirms their soundness and correctness.

I generally believe that: It is necessary to confirm the following in any academic research:

Firstly- The authenticity of the attribution of the famous historical books like 'Al-Ghaybah', 'Ikmal al-Din', 'Al-Irshad', and 'Al-Fusul' to their real authors, and also that no addition, deletion or interpolation has happened to the books. This is really very difficult and impossible as there are no authentic books, those attributed to their real authors-in the whole of Shiite heritage, except four books of Hadith-'Al-Kafi', 'Manla Yahduru al-Faqih', 'Al-Tahdhib' and 'Al-Istibsar', which were narrated by scholars one from the other.

There must be, secondly, a study of the authors, including the extent of their scrupulousness and accuracy. This is possible and not difficult.

Then it is also imperative to study the chains of narrators from whom they transmit, and to be certain of their existence, truthfulness and accuracy. For some narrators are non-existing i.e they were illusory fabricators, while some of them were fabricating and lying extremists. That was in accordance with the scholars of Twelver-Imam Shiites like Tusi, Najashi, Kashi, Ibn al-Ghada'iri and so on.

There were other reporters accepted by all the scholars of Hadith among the Twelver-Imam Shiites on the basis of their reliability, truthfulness and reporting from then...but the remaining Imamate Shiites and other Islamic sects do not accept (Hadith) from them and they doubt their truthfulness like the four special deputies and others who claimed to have seen 'Imam Mahdi' and to have met him and to have been appointed as deputies by him.

Any study on the chains of these historical reports, which establish the birth and existence of 'Imam Mahdi' is supposed to study the objective circumstances surrounding these 'deputies', and to review its stand on their reliability and truthfulness.... As the Shiites reviewed their stand on many of the companions of Imam Kadhimi (peace be upon him), those who stopped and ended (the Imamate) on him claiming that he went into occultation and that he was 'the Mahdi', despite their reliability and truthfulness. They stopped at least, short of accepting their reports in which they discussed the continuation of the life of Imam Kadhimi...especially after they have been accused of benefiting financially from the claim of Imam Kadhimi's Mahdism, occultation and meeting him.

Historians and other writers on 'Imam Mahdi' used to take for granted the reliability of the 'four deputies' and to believe and accept their reports on seeing Imam Mahdi and receiving signatures from him.... This is a kind of predetermined connivance or inclination, blind acceptance and simplemindedness as regards men accused of fabricating the story from the beginning, and of exploiting it in order to achieve personal material gains.

They were doubted in their lives and integrity, because the Shiites doubted the truth of their claim of 'representation' and were also asking about the fate of the wealth, which they collect in the name of 'Imam Mahdi', and some of claimants to representation accused the others of lying. Each group accused the other of mischief and deception.

There is nothing to confirm the truth of the 'four deputies' claim, out of more than twenty persons who claimed 'special representation' in those days, except a number of hearsays that the deputies/representatives (of the 'Mahdi') have performed some miracles and have knowledge of the Unseen. Historians, like 'Kulayni', 'Saduq', 'Tusi' and 'Mufid' in their works, mentioned these things and they believed it has happened to some of the 'deputies', but rejected it for the others.

If we rejected the stories of miracles and the knowledge of the unseen which were claimed by the 'four deputies' or which were spread by their supporters, there will be nothing to present as evidence on their truth and which distinguish them from the other false claimants, because all have been accused of benefiting personally.

Due to this we will study the claims of narrators of these historical stories which mention the birth, existence and the sight of 'Imam Mahdi Muhammad bin Hassan Askari' objectively, and we will solely rely on the judgment of weakness (or soundness) from the Hadith scholars of the Twelver-Imam Shiites. If we have any personal opinion on any particular man, we will present particular evidences on him.

THE REPORT OF HAKIMAH

Saduq reports in 'Ikmal al-Din' p. 424, the story of the birth of 'Sahib al-Zaman' from Muhammad bin Hassan bin Walid. He said: 'Muhammad bin Yahya al-Attar has told us that he heard from Abu Abdullah Hussain bin Rizqullah, who said that Musa bin Muhammad Qasim told him that Hakimah told him that...

Hussain bin Rizqullah is an unknown person or a fabricator, with no mention of him in the works of biographies of hadith reporters, while Musa bin Muhammad is not taken seriously.

In some copies we find 'Hussain bin Ubaidullah' instead of 'Abu Abdullah Hussain'. Najashi accused Hussain of extremism.

In another narration, Saduq transmits the story from Hussain bin Ahmad bin Idris, who said, my father told me that Muhammad bin Isma'il told him that Muhammad Ibrahim al-Kufi said that Muhammad bin Abdullah al-Tahwi reported from Hakimah...

The copies of 'Ikmal al-Din' differ in the name of al-Tahwi. In some of them he is al-Zahri, and yet another one as al-Zuhri. In yet another copy his name is al-Mutahhari and also elsewhere as al-Tuhri. There is no mention of this man in the books on narrators, which makes it likely that some narrators invented him. Anyway he is unknown.

As for Sheikh Tusi, he reported the story in 'al-Ghaybah' (1) from the aunt of Imam Askari. He calls her Khadijah instead of Hakimah.

He transmits the story again through Ibn Abi Jayyid from Muhammad bin Hassan bin Walid from Saffar Muhammad bin Hassan al-Qummi from Abu Abdullah al-Mutahhari from Hakimah, who mentioned that the name of the mother of the son of Hassan was 'Susan' and not 'Narjis' as was in the report of Saduq.

He narrates the story in a third report from Ibn Jayyid from Muhammad bin Hassan bin Walid from Muhammad bin Yahya al-Attar from Muhammad bin Hamuwaih al-Razi from Hussain bin Rizqullah from Musa bin Muhammad....

In a fourth report transmitted by Tusi from Ahmad bin Ali al-Razi from Muhammad bin Ali from Ali bin Sami' bin Banan from Muhammad bin Ali bin Abi al-Dari from Ahmad bin Muhammad from Ahmad bin Abdullah from Ahmad Ruh al-Ahwazi from Muhammad bin Ibrahim from Hakimah, similar to the first Hadith, except that he said here: 'She said Abu Muhammad (Askari) sent to me in the fifteenth night of Ramadan, and not Sha'aban.

In a fifth report transmitted by Tusi from Ahmad bin Ali al-Razi from Muhammad bin Ali from Hanzalah bin Zakariyya' who said that a reliable source told me from Muhammad bin Bilal from Hakimah....

In a sixth narration, transmitted by Tusi from a group of scholars from Hakimah....

In this last report Tusi did not mention the name of any person from the scholars who reported (indirectly) from Hakimah, without the mention of any chain of narration. This invalidates it as evidence to be considered.

In the report just before the last, Hanzalah bin Zakariya (considered as weak by Najashi) did not say who the reliable source that told him was? As for Muhammad bin Ali bin Bilal, he was one of the claimants to being deputy (of the Mahdi), he has differed with Muhammad bin Uthman al-Umari. As far as Ahmad bin Ali al-Razi is concerned, Tusi himself put him among the weak reporters. Najashi also considered him weak, likewise Ibn al-Ghada'iri. They also accused of being an extremist.

From this, the condition of the fourth narration transmitted by Tusi from Ahmad bin Ali al-Razi (the weak extremist), who narrates it from an unknown person, i.e 'Ahmad al-Ahwazi, becomes clear.'

As for the third report, we find in it the name of 'Muhammad bin Hamuwaih al-Razi' who is also unknown, in addition to 'Hussain bin Rizqullah', equally an unknown person.

In the second report, the name of 'Muhammad bin Abdullah al-Tahwi' was substituted with the name of Abu Abdullah al-Mutahhari...an unknown person in both cases.

As for the first report, the aunt of the Imam says in it that she did not witness the birth of the son of Hassan, she only heard about it as a news written by Abu Muhammad to his mother in Madinah.

Therefore, later extremists reported the report of Hakimah on the birth of the son of Hassan, from weak reporters from unknown persons from fabricators.... It is not possible to depend on it at all.

A MAN FROM THE PEOPLE OF PERSIA

Kulayni transmits in 'Al-Kafi' (2) , so also saduq in 'Ikamlal-Din'(3), Tusi in 'al-ghaybah'(4) and al-Sadr in 'Al-ghaybah'(5) story of 'a man from the people of Persia who went to 'Surr Man Ra'a and stayed in the house of Abu Muhammad hassan Askari working

with the servants.. One day he saw a white child, and the Imam Hassan said to him, “This is your companion (Imam)”.

This is a very weak report. There is no need to pause on it, as it did not mention the name of the reporter. It only says he is a man from the people of persis! This can never be accepted in Hadith.

YA’QUB BIN MANQUSH

As for the report of Yaqub bin Manqush, in which he says that he asked Imam Askari, one day: “Who is the owner of of this affair?” He said to him, “Raise the curtain from the door of the house”. A child of five years came out of it. He then said, “This is your companion”. The report transmitted by Saduq from Abu Talib al-Muzaffar bin Ja’far bin al-Muzaffar al-Alawi al-Samarqandi, from Ja’far bin Muhammad bin Masud from his father, Muhammad bin Mas’ud al-Iyashi from Adam al-Balkhi from Ali bin Hassan bin Harun al-Daqqaq from Ja’far bin Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Qasim from Ya’qub bin Manqush. This report is very weak.

Firstly: Due to the non-existence of a person called Al-Muzaffar al-Samarqandi in the biographies of reporters.

Secondly: Because Al-Iyashi used to report from a lot of weak reporters as Najashi says. He believes in the interpolation of the Quran clearly in his Tafsir.

Thirdly: Due to the belief of Adam al-Balkhi in ‘Tafwid (the belief that Allah gave to Muhammad creation of the world). He was one of the extremists who believed that Allah created Muhammad, and gave him the power of the creation of the world. He is the creator in it. He (Muhammad) then gave that power (of creation) to Ali (see Biography of Najashi).

Fourthly: Due also to the neglect of Al-Daqqaq and the difference in the name of his father, whether Hassan and Hussain

Fifthly: Due to Ja’far bin Muhammad bin Abdullah being an unknown person.

Sixthly: Due to Ya’qub bin Manqush being an unreliable person and the problem of his father’s name between Manqush, Manfush and Manfus.

UTHMAN BIN SA’ID AL-UMARI

As for the report transmitted by Saduq in ‘Ikmal al-Dn’ (6), and Tusi in ‘Al-Ghaybah’ (7 from a group including Uthman bin Sa’id al-Umari, Muawiyah bin Hakim and Muhammad

bin Ayyub, and the statement of the Imam to them: “This is your Imam after me...” Both Saduq and Tusi reported it from Ja’far bin Muhammad bin Malik al-Fazari, a well-known liar, and fabricator of Hadiths. Ibn Al-Ghada’iri says of him: “ A liar whose Hadith is abandoned altogether, from weak and unknown reporters. All the defects of the weak are found in him. He reported many strange things as regards the birth of the Qa’im. Najashi says of him. “He was a weak reporter of Hadith Ahmad bin Hussain said that, he used to seriously fabricate Hadith, reporting from unknown persons. I heard one who said that: ‘He was misguided in his views and his report of Hadith’. I did not know how our noble reliable Sheikh Abu Ali bin Hammam and our reliable great Sheikh Abu Ghalib al-Razi reported from him.”

On the report of ‘Nasim’ and ‘Tarif Abu Nasr’ the two servants of Imam Askari, their two reports were transmitted by Saduq from Al-Muzaffar al-Samarqandi (the abandoned) from ‘Iyashi (the weak) from Adam al-Balkhi (the extremist who believed in ‘tafwid’) (see above).

As for the report of Isma’il Nubakhti from Tusi from Ahmad bin Ali al-Razi, it is very weak, because Tusi himself did not consider al-Razi as a reliable person, and accused him of weakness and extremism, in addition to Ibn al-Ghada’iri and Najashi’s accusation of him on that.

Tusi reports another narration from Jafar bin Muhammad bin Malik al-Fazari, and from Ahmad bin Ali al-Razi from Kamil bin Ibrahim al-Madani who says that: ‘He went to Imam Askari, and when the wind blew it waved the curtain spread on the door (to the side), he saw a youth behind (the door). The child recognized him and called him by his name. Then the curtain spread back to its position, and he could not remove it. This report as is clear, is very weak especially due to its being reported by Al-Fazari, Al-Razi, two weak extremists.

ABU AL-ADYAN AL-BASRI

As for the report of ‘Abu Al-Adyan al-Basri’ which only Saduq has reported, and he mentioned it without the proper chain of narration, when he says, Abu Al-Adyan that. Despite the fact that there is a period of about one hundred years between the two, no one knows any person of that name, which further emphasized his fabrication from some of the extremists.

On the completion of the story—that is, the arrival of the delegations from Qum and the Mountains to ‘Surr Man Raa’—which was transmitted by Saduq..., we find in its chain of narration was ‘Ahmad bin Hussain Al-Abi al-Arudi and (Abu) Hussain (Ibn) Zayd bin Abdullah al-Baghdadi from Sinan al-Mawsili from his father. All of them were unknown persons, with no mention in the biography books (of reporters) in addition to the discrepancy in the name of al-Baghdadi.

SA'AD BIN ABDULLAH AL-QUMMI

As regards the report of Sa'ad bin Abdullah al-Qummi in which he says that he went to Imam Askari together with Ahmad bin Ishaq. He saw on the lap of the Imam a child who was playing with a golden pomegranate. This report was transmitted by Saduq from Al-Nawfali al-Karmani from Ahmad bin 'Isa al-Washsha' al-Baghdadi from Ahmad bin Tahir al-Qummi... There is in the chain of this report four abandoned and unknown persons. As for the fifth reporter Al-Shaibani', he was one of the weak and the extremists who believe in tafwid (believing that the affairs of the world were given to Muhammad then to Ali), as mentioned by Kashi, Ibn al-Ghada'iri, Tusi and Najashi.

Allama al-Hilli in 'Al-Khulasah' withdrew confidence from Sa'ad bin Abdullah al-Qummi after this report. Shahid al-Thani said: "The signs of fabrication in this (report) are evident, that was due to what was contained in the report, that the Mahdi was playing with a golden pomegranate!"

Therefore, the great weakness in the chain of each report invalidates them all from being evidence or being relied on.... when we put the weakness in the chain of narration together with the weakness in the text.... and the contradiction in the reports themselves... and their contradicting the Zahirite report ... Then, it will be mere illusion and hearsays and myths... which cannot establish the birth of an ordinary person....

Then how can we depend on them in establishing the birth of one of the Imams and the construction of a religious creed on the basis of that?

On the story of an attempt to arrest the Mahdi as reported by Tusi, Majlisi and Sadr, it was an unconnected (Mursal) report to 'Rashiq' the unknown policeman, whose integrity is doubted. It is weak due to its not mentioning the identity of the man who was praying on a mat, and that the reports contain strange things like: 'Mahdi's stay in the house of his father and in Samirra'i throughout the period of the occultation. This is far from the truth. It was possible for him to move around in the land and to hide in other places. Of these (strange things) was that the report comprises of strange miracles for which there was no need, and it conforms to the report of extremists and their myths.

Al-Mutadid the Abbasid caliph, was known for inclining towards Shiism, and he insisted on cursing Mu'awiyah on pulpits, and ordered the writing of a book to be read for the people in this regard, as pointed out by Ibn Al-Athir in his 'Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh' (8). This makes the report far from being sound, as it claims that he tried to arrest Imam Mahdi. It is more likely that it was fabricated due to the story of Mahdi hiding in the canopy.

C: ASSESSING THE TESTIMONY OF THE FOUR DEPUTIES

The clear historical reporting of the Hadith after the death of Imam Hassan Askari says that: 'The Imam did not leave behind any offspring whether a male or a female, and that he gave his wealth in a will, to his mother: (Hadith), due to this his brother Ja'far claimed the

Imamate and a group of Shiites followed him (on that)'. As for the report of the deputies it says that: 'there was a hidden son for Imam Askari and they claimed to be his deputies and representatives. Believing them will lead to believing in the existence of 'Hujjah bin Hassan ' (Mahdi), but doubting their claims will not establish anything in the secret report on the existence of a son for Imam Askari. Were they really truthful? Have the Shiites agreed on their reliability? How did they believe them? What is the evidence on the validity of their statements? Is there anything that can make us doubt and be skeptical, of their claims of being deputies of Imam Mahdi and doubt his existence?

Before we assess those reports that came praising them and claiming their reliability, we must point out that this phenomenon of claiming to be a deputy of Imam Mahdi was not the first phenomenon in Shiite history, as many phenomena, appeared before it. And before the four deputies, many people have claimed to be representatives and deputies of the earlier Imams, those who claimed for them Mahdism (i.e being the Mahdi), like Imam Musa Kadhim (peace be upon him) whose life was believed to have continued after his death, as they believed in his occultation also. Among them were Muhammad bin Bashir who claimed being his deputy. He later bequeathed it to his sons and grandsons.

More than twenty persons have claimed being the deputies of 'Imam Muhammad bin Hassan Askari' among them were: Al-Shari'i, Al-Namiri, Al-Ibrata'i al-Hallaj, and so on. That was because the claim of being a deputy brings with it many material benefits, as well as a socio-political status for the claimants. Moreso that the claimant used to work underground and in secret, and investigating his claim is not allowed. He exploited his previous relationship with the Imam, and so he claimed his continued life or his existence, and his being his deputy.... His claim used to be accepted by the simpleminded, and rejected by the enlightened wise people. The Imamate Shiites have rejected the claims of more than twenty claimants of being deputies of 'Imam Mahdi bin Hassan Askari'. They accused them of lying and deceit, as they doubted the validity of the claims of those four deputies. They differed on their affairs. There was not single strong intellectual evidence in the reports narrated by the historians on their truthfulness and the validity of their claims. This is what makes these people a part of false claimants who traded with the issue of Imam Mahdi!

Sheikh Tusi did depend in the reliability of Uthman bin Sa'id al-Umari on a number of reports. Some of them were like the report of Ahmad bin Ishaq al-Qummi, who stated the reliance and trust of Imams Hadi and Askari in him during life and after death. And that he was the deputy and the trusted and reliable person on Allah's wealth. There is nothing in it that establishes Al-Umari's deputyship of Imam Mahdi. But some reports were stating clearly that Imam Askari declared the deputyship of al-Umari to Imam Mahdi, except that the chain of this narration is very weak, as it includes Ja'far bin Muhammad bin Malik al-Fazari, concerning whom Najashi and Ibn Al-Ghada'iri have stated: "He was a liar whose Hadith is rejected, and he was extremist in some of his views. He reports from weak and unknown reporters. All the faults of weak reporters were found in him. He has reported on the birth of Qa'im strange things. He used to clearly fabricate Hadith. He has deviated from the path and his reports were not sound".

As for the previous report which mentions the reliability of al-Umari and his honesty, and his being the deputy (of Imam), that is unknown. There is in its chain an extremist 'Al-Khusaibi'. It comprises of the claim on Imam Askari's knowledge of the Unseen, and his knowledge of the delegation from Yemen before he saw it. (9) This claim is part of the concepts of the extremists. The first report says that Askari has mentioned the uprightness of

al-Umari in future after his death. Only Allah knows this, it being part of the knowledge of the Unseen also.

From here and after the invalidity of these reports due to their weakness in terms of both their texts and their chains of narration, we seem to reach one conclusion, that is, Al-Umari who was the deputy of the two Imams Hadi and Askari in collecting funds, wanted to continue enjoying that post and claimed the existence of a son for Imam Askari, so as to claim being his deputy also without producing a confirmed and clear evidence on what he was saying. Due to this the historians were certain, and do not confirm his deputyship of the Mahdi. Al-Tabrisi, who was so eager to record whatever comes to him, did not state in his book: 'Al-Ihtijaj' more than (these words): "Al-Umari performed the affairs of the 'Sahib al-Zaman' his signatures and responses to issues were all coming through him." (10)

The Shiite historians did not mention any miracle that confirms his claim of being deputy, despite the statement of Sayyid Abdullah Shibr in 'Haq al-Yaqin' that; the Shiites would not accept the statements of the deputies until after the appearance of any miracle on each of the deputies from the Sahib al-Zaman, which would show the truth of their statements and the validity of their intentions.

As for the second deputy; Muhammad bin Uthman bin Sa'id al-Umari, the Shiite historians did not mention any text regarding him from the Mahdi, appointing him as his deputy. Tusi said: "He took the place of his father through a text from Abu Muhammad 'Hassan Askari', and the text from his father Uthman by the order of the Qa'im." (12)

Tusi has mentioned a report from Abdullah bin Ja'far al-Himyari al-Qummi who said that: 'The Mahdi sent to Al-Umari a note passing his condolence to him on the death of his father, Uthman bin Sa'id. He praised Allah who has placed him in the place of his father and prayed for his success. The letters came to us in the same handwriting as was being communicated to us by placing Abu Ja'far in the position of his father. Tusi also reported another tradition from Muhammad bin Ibrahim bin Mahziyar al-Ahwazi, and another one from Ishaq bin Yaqub from Imam Mahdi, who testified on his reliability and his acceptance of him. All these reports were transmitted through Al-Umari himself, which made them weak.

There is no any way of confirming the claim that Uthman bin Sa'id Al-Umari has stated that his son Muhammad will be deputy, through the instructions of the Qa'im. It seems it was simply a guess from Tusi. As there is no any evidence to establish the text from the father to the son, except through inheritance and claims.

The greatest problem is found in the difficulty of confirming the validity of the signatures which were brought by al-Umari and which he attributed to Imam Mahdi, especially the signature reported by Al-Himyari al-Qummi, as he did not mention his chain of transmission to the occult Imam, which makes it more likely that it was Al-Umari who wrote it with his hand, and attributed it to the Mahdi. Moreso that he was praising himself so much, which becloud it with ambiguity even if the Imam is present talkless of when he is absent? There is no any reporter for the issue of signatures except Al-Umari himself. Al-Himyari did not say how he quickly believed the signatures while there was a controversy at that time among the Shiites on the truth of Al-Umari in his claim of being deputy? There is the possibility that Al-Himyari al-Qummi might have fabricated the signature himself and he attributed it the Mahdi.

On the report of Muhammad bin Ibrahim bin Mahziyar al-Ahwazi, it is weak, because he confessed that in the beginning he doubted the existence of the Mahdi, and he claimed being a deputy after that, and after his meeting with Al-Umari in Baghdad, due to this he was a doubtful person in his affairs. He did not say how the signature reached him directly or through al-Umari? If he claims that it reached him directly but how? Has he seen the Mahdi himself? He did not claim that! Or it came to him through Al-Umari? This will also raise doubts.

As for the third report (report of Ishaq bin Ya'qub), it clearly declares that it was from Al-Umari. It is weak due to doubts that Al-Umari might have fabricated it. So also due to unknown reporters; and the weakness (unreliability) of Ishaq bin Ya'qub, and his not declaring how he knew the handwriting of the Mahdi, knowing that Tusi was saying that: 'The handwriting in the notes (signatures) was the same as such that was written in the days of Askari.' (13)

Lastly, the story of Muhammad bin Uthman Al-Umari in sighting the Mahdi during the Hajj, was more of a claim devoid of evidence. He did not state how he knew the Mahdi whom he has never seen before? It may be that someone resembles him.

Due to this, Ahmad bin Hilal al-Ibrata'i (the leader of Shiites in Baghdad) from whom Al-Fazari reported that he claimed to have witnessed the occasion when Askari presented the Mahdi, and Al-Umari was appointed as his successor (Khalifah)- Al-Ibrata'i doubted the validity of Al-Umari's claim that his son is a special deputy of the Mahdi. He denied having heard Imam Askari stating that he was his representative. He rejected and refused to admit that he was the representative of 'Sahib al-Zaman'. (14)

Al-Ibrata'i had played a great role in supporting the claim of Uthman bin Sa'id al-Umari, of being representative. He was hoping that he would receive the will (of being chosen for that) after him. When he gave the will to his son Muhammad, he rejected that and claimed to be the deputy himself. This shows that there was connivance and interests in the various claims of being special deputies.

As a result of the absence of authentic and confirmed traditions on the deputyship of Muhammad bin Uthman Al-Umari, the shiites doubted his claim. Al-Majlisi reported in 'Bihar al-Anwar' that: "The shiites were in a state of confusion, and were not relying on the many claims of being 'deputies'". He said that Abu al-Abbas Ahmad Al-Siraj al-Dainuri did ask al-Umari on the evidence which confirms the validity of his claim, and that he will not believe in him, unless if another person tells him that from (knowledge) of the unseen, and present him a miracle'. (15)

The tradition of Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) which states that 'Our servants and our keepers are the worst of Allah's creations' was very popular in those days among the Shiites, which made them doubt the validity of claims of 'representation'. Sheikh Tusi has affirmed the validity of that tradition, but he said: "It is not generally so, but they only said that, because among them were those who changed and distorted and were treacherous." (16)

Some Shiites did show their regret on giving wealth to Al-Umari, as they doubted the existence of Mahdi and the signatures (notes) brought by al-Umari and which were attributed to him. There was among these people a section of Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). This

was what made Al-Umari to issue a letter as originating from the Mahdi, condemning the doubters and the deniers of the existence of the Mahdi.

As another section of them doubted the validity of Nubakhti being a deputy, and kept on asking him on the fate of the wealth which he used to receive in the name of Imam Mahdi, he said that: 'This wealth goes to where it should not (not spent in the legal way)'. Saduq and Tusi said that, 'Nubakhti was able to convince them by means of miracles and the knowledge of the Unseen, like specifying the time of the death of some people before the appointed time, and his picking some dirhams from a man's bag, from a distance. (17)

In fact, the Shiite historians used to mention a number of stories on peoples' doubts regarding the claimants to the post of 'deputy', with some of them, accusing the others of telling lie. The general masses of the Twelver- Imam Shiites distinguished those 'four deputies' from the other accused claimants, on the basis of their power of producing miracles and the possession of the knowledge of the Unseen.

Kulayni, Mufid and Tusi have mentioned tens of stories showing that the 'four deputies' have performed many strange things of miraculous nature and informed of things to come. Tusi has narrated from 'Hibatullah' the grandson of al-Umari who said: "The miracles of the Imam appeared on him and he used to tell of the Unseen". (18)

Tusi has also mentioned a story from Ali bin Ahmad al-Dallal, who said that: 'Al-Umari told him the time of his death, the day, the month and the year. And he died on the day, the month and the year as he foretold, that was in the end of Jumada al-Ula, 305 A.H.' (19)

But this statement contradicts the principles of Shiism and the traditions of members of Prophet's family (peace be upon them), who used to deny any knowledge of the Unseen (al-Ghayb), or employing the miraculous unseen means to establish their Imamate. Sheikh Saduq said in 'Ikmal al-Din': "The Imam does not know the Unseen, he is only a pious servant teaching the Quran and the Sunnah. Anyone who ascribes the knowledge of the Unseen to the Imams has committed disbelief (Kufr) in Allah, and has gone out of the fold of Islam in our view. The unseen is known only to Allah, no one claims it for a human except one who associates something to Allah and is an unbeliever." (20)

Imam Sadiq said: "What a surprise for some people claiming that we know the unseen (al-ghayb)! By Allah I had wanted to beat my housemaid, so and so, but she fled away from me. I do not know in which house she is (now)" (21)

Abu Bashir one day came to Imam Sadiq and said to him: "They are saying that you know the (number) of drops in the rain water and the number of stars, and the number of leaves of trees, and the weight of what is in the sea and the number of particles of the earth. He said; Glory be to Allah! Glory be to Allah! No, by Allah no one knows that except Allah." (22)

Yahya bin Abdullah asked Imam Musa Kadhim (peace be upon him) saying: "May I be made your ransom, they are claiming that you know the Unseen?" He replied: "Glory be to Allah! Put your hand on my head by Allah there is no hair on it and on my body except that it has been aroused. No by Allah it is nothing other than the inheritance from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him)". (23)

In another narration transmitted by Al-Hurr al-Amili, the Imam says in it: 'The ignorant and the unwise Shiites have done harm to us, and those whose religion weighs less than the wing of a mosquito....I am free from those who say that we know the Unseen, before Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him).'" (24)

Therefore we cannot believe the claim of those 'deputies' regarding their being Imam Mahdi's deputies, and we (cannot) consider their statements evidence on the existence of the Imam, depending on the claim of miracles and the knowledge of the Unseen. We cannot distinguish their claims from those of false claimants to deputyship, whose number was more than twenty four.

If we accuse these false claimants of attempting to benefit (from those claims), and of the love of wealth and of having relations with the Abbasid authorities of those days, the same accusations will have to be directed to the 'four deputies', who were not aloof from them.

Muhammad bin Ali al-Shalnaghani, who was the representative of Hussain bin Ruh al-Nubakhti in the Banu Bistam, he then dissociated himself from them and claimed being deputy himself said: "We did not enter with Abu Qasim Hussain bin Ruh in this affair except that we know why we entered it. We were scrambling on this affair as the dogs were scrambling over the carrion. " (25)

If we could not establish the claims of the 'four deputies' and we doubted the validity of their statements, how can we establish the existence of 'Imam Muhammad bin Hassan Askari, based on their testimonies of meeting him and being his deputies?

In addition to this doubt there is another evidence on the falsehood of the claimants to being deputies, that was their not playing any cultural or intellectual or political role in the service of the Shiites and the Muslims except collection of funds and the claims of giving it to Imam Mahdi.

It was supposed that the 'deputies' who claimed the existence of a special, relationship between them and 'Imam Mahdi', 'would solve all the problems of the sect, and would have transmitted the instructions and guidance of the Imam to the Ummah. Rather we see the 'third deputy', Hussain bin Ruh Nubakhti for example, resorting to the scholars of Qum, so as to solve for him the problem of Shalmaghani who had revolted against him. He sent Shalmaghani's work 'Al-Ta'dib' to Qum seeking from the city's scholars to distinguish the sound and the weak in the book, as was reported by Tusi in 'Al-Ghaybah'. (26)

There is in this an indication of lack of any contact between him and the Mahdi. Otherwise he would have put the book before him and ask him about its soundness.

What further strengthens the doubts on the non-existence of the Mahdi Muhammad bin Hassan Askari, was the inability of those who claimed to be deputies to fill the fiqhi vacuum, and to expose many ambiguous matters that need to be cleared in that period of time. It is well known that Kulayni wrote the book of 'Al-Kafi' during the days of Nubakhti, and that he has filled it with weak and fabricated traditions, which discuss the interpolation of the Quran and other invalid things. But neither Nubakhti nor Al-Samri commented on the fabricated traditions, and nor did they correct any thing from the book which caused the

harming of Shiites throughout the ages, and put them in a fix of not identifying the sound traditions from the fabricated ones.

Sayyid Murtadah did invent the theory of 'Lutf' (Compassion and clemency) in which he says: 'Imam Mahdi must interfere to correct the 'Ijtihad' of Fuqaha, during the occultation, so as to stop their agreeing on something invalid and wrong. Based on this, the right, better and simpler thing was for 'Imam Mahdi' to correct the book of Kulayni, if he ever existed, or that he leaves behind him an all-sufficing work, in the period of major occultation, as a reference for the Shiites. This did not happen. The claimants to 'Niyaba' (representation) did not produce anything in this regard. This is what would make us doubt their truth and their claim of the existence of an 'occult Imam' upon whom they depended.

Sheikh Hassan al-Farid (a colleague of Imam Khomeini) in his book 'Risalah fi al-Khums' was surprised and astonished and also perplexed when he asked the secret behind why Kulayni did not ask the 'Sahib al-Zaman' (Mahdi) through his deputy Nubakhti on the issue of Khums (one-fifth) in the 'occultation period'. (27)

D: ASSESSING THE LETTERS OF 'MAHDI'

The supporters of the theory on the existence of Imam Mahdi possess some letters, which they believed the Imam has sent to a number of people, and they took that as additional evidence on the validity of their theory on the existence of 'Imam Muhammad bin Hassan Askari'. After our study of these reports and scrutinizing the chains of narration however, their weakness became very clear. It was nothing other than hearsay that was spread by those who claimed to be 'deputies'.

The first report by Tusi came from a group of people, whom he did not identify from Abu Muhammad al-Tal'akbari from Ahmad bin Ali al-Razi, about whom the Shiite scholars of narrators (Rijal) say that, he was a weak and extremist (reporter). In addition to that, Ahmad bin Ishaq al-Qummi did not mention the means of correspondence with 'Sahib al-Zaman', or indicate the one who takes the issues (Letters) to him. It is therefore likely that he fabricated the letters himself.

As for the second letter, Tusi also reported it through Ahmad bin Ali al-Razi (the weak extremist) from a number of unknown persons. In addition, it contains something irrational, i.e. seeking judgement from an unknown person, whose existence is a controversy, to establish his very existence! It is possible that, one of the deputies would write the response. Knowing fully that doubting the existence of the son of Hassan requires doubting the truth of the 'deputies', how can we then return to one of them relying on him, before confirming his truthfulness, or believing in what papers he present, claiming them coming from the Mahdi?

As for the report from Saduq known as 'Al-Tawqi' it was weak due to the status of Ishaq bin Ya'qub as a weak reporter, and his being unknown; so also its not being mentioned by earlier scholars like Kulayni; and due to the report containing a number of incorrect issues

like: Firstly, the praise of the transmitter of the letter namely ‘the second deputy, Muhammad bin Uthman al-Umari’ on himself and his father. This supports the likelihood of its being his own fabrication. Secondly, the legality of Khums (one-fifth) during the period of the occultation till the appearance (of the Mahdi), this contradicts the continuation of Islamic injunctions in all times. The Shiite scholars have of recent refrained from believing in this legality, due to its contradiction with (other) Islamic principles. Thirdly, the demand of refraining from asking the cause of the occultation, despite that the philosophy of occultation is one of the necessary religious matters that must be known in the way of belief in the Mahdi. Hence that report- the letter, is very weak and cannot be certified.

Likewise is the case of the second report of Saduq from Al-Umari, which he transmitted from Abu Abdullah Ja’far, who says that he has found it confirmed from Sa’ad bin Abdullah, i.e. he did not report it directly, he only found it in a book. It is well known in the science of narration that finding a report in a book (and reporting it) is the weakest form of narration. In addition to that, Sa’ad did not mention how he came about the letter? Or who informed him of it? He did not report it from the two al-Umaris, who did not mention it clearly. He only reports that it is from another person, without specifying his name, but he supposed he was the Mahdi. If the report from the two al-Umaris is sound, it can be of their own writing, in support of their theory based on the existence of Mahdi, and as support to their claim of being his ‘deputies’, Hence it cannot constitute an evidence.

Regarding the letters of Sheikh Mufid, which were mentioned by Tabrisi and Ibn Shahrashub in their works, Mufid himself did not mention them in any of his books. Even if its ascription to him is confirmed, it does not constitute any evidence. That was because Mufid says that, he received it from a village-Arab man unknown to him, and the handwriting in it was not that of the Mahdi, but of another person, to whom the Mahdi dictated its contents. Mufid had refused to present those letters from the village-Arab man to any of his companions. He claimed that was due to the instruction of the Mahdi. He did not present to the people except letters written in his own handwriting. He said the Mahdi had requested him to do that.

If this is valid...We are in fact witnessing letters in Sheikh Mufid’s handwriting himself saying that they were copies of the letters which the village-Arab man handed over to him having received them from another unknown man, and being the writer of the letters. That unknown man was saying that Imam Mahdi has dictated them to him. In other words we are before a tradition reported by a single reporter, reported by Mufid from an unknown man from an unknown man also from Mahdi.

This raises number possibilities: Like, its likelihood of coming from Mufid, moreso that it entails a lot of excessive praise and commendation on him. In some of it, Mahdi mentioned the name of Mufid before his very name. Of these possibilities is its coming from the village-Arab Man, or from the third man who lied to the writer, and claimed to be the Mahdi. In the same way, the report in the field of science of Hadith, does not deserves even the least of attention or even a short or long pause.

THE PROBLEM OF RECOGNIZING THE HAND WRITING

I would like to draw the attention of the reader to an important point, i.e. the issue of Imam Mahdi’s handwriting in those letters and the many notes attributed to him. The man who believes in the Mahdi especially today will long for seeing his handwriting, if he was not

lucky enough to see him in person. He would hope that history have preserved even if only one copy of those letters and notes. He would also hope that the Shiites in those days have recognized that importance and have preserved the letters of Imam in their historical treasures. For such kinds of documents constitute the most important material for the study of that period, and for confirming the truth on 'Imam Mahdi', and the circumstances that led to the occultation.

Based on this I have attempted to examine all the signs of 'Imam Mahdi's' handwriting in his letters, and to search for any copy of those letters, and to follow his notes (Tawaqi). I thought in the beginning, or I supposed that the Shiites of those times especially the four deputies or the Fuqaha (Jurists) or scholars of Hadith, might have given a lot of importance to the preservation of those letters. I did not find any trace of that. I found instead doubting ambiguity surrounding this issue. I also found in the note 'al-Tawqi' reported by Tabrisi in 'al-Ihtijaj' from Ishaq bin Ya'qub formal-Umari, a text saying: "... Don't show our handwriting, written by us to anyone." This shows the contrary of what was expected, in terms of concern and importance in recognizing the handwriting and in preserving the letters of Mahdi, so also the non-existence of one particular handwriting known to be that of the Mahdi, which can always be referred to for comparing the remaining letters with it, to confirm its genuineness. I also discovered that Sheikh Tusi was discussing the 'Handwriting of Mahdi' skeptically, when he said: 'Abu Nasr Hibatullah has said: "I found in the handwriting of Abu Ghalib al-Razi: 'Al -Umari was responsible for this matter --representation), for about fifty years. People bring to him their wealth and he will obtain for them 'Notes' in the same handwriting as the time of Hassan (peace be upon him), explaining some worldly and religious affairs, and what they used to ask him, he responded in a strange manner."' (28)

He did not relate why Al-Umari was doing that? And why was he not producing the notes in the handwriting of the Mahdi? It is well known that recognizing the handwriting of Imam Hassan himself was a problem during his life. As some of those who claimed to be his deputies among the extremists, resorted to forging his handwriting. The Shiites due to that faced the problem of recognizing and confirming the handwriting of Imam Askari, during his life. How can the handwriting of 'Imam Mahdi' who was not seen by anyone be recognized? The handwriting that was never seen, nor was its existence ever confirmed. The common people do not possess any means of confirming it?

With the existence of this major problem, al-Umari was not handing over any handwriting or notes to anyone. He was rather, showing it to them only or copy it in his own handwriting. Sheikh Mufid has resorted to---according to the so-called report-- similar manner also. He presented copies in his handwriting, and said that they were quoted from 'Letters from Mahdi', which were not at all written in his handwriting, but were dictation from him to an unknown writer.

If we had obtained copies from the handwriting of 'Imam Mahdi', it would be within our ability to compare them and confirm its attribution to him, or distinguish the genuine from the forged ones among them. Nothing of that had happened.

Due to this, it is possible for us to regard the secrecy surrounding the handwriting and its concealment' was an additional evidence on the non-existence of 'Muhammad bin Hassan Askari', who, if he had really existed and was hiding and in occultation for security reasons would have resorted to, without doubt, establishing his existence and his person among the Shiite populace, and would have led them through the letters signed by him, in a manner that

would have not left any doubt or controversy. It would have been possible to recognize and distinguish them by recognizing his handwriting and by comparing them, as one of the several means by which he establishes himself.

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